Metrical Musings

BY

G. F. RINEHART.

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Metrical Musings

—BY—

G. F. RINEHART,

NEWTON, IOWA.

Being a collection of songs, good, bad and indifferent, plucked from passing moods.

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DEDICATION.

To my wife and children, who have unconsciously furnished much of the inspiration for these lines.

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G. F. RINEHART, NEWTON, IOWA.

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Yours truly
G. F. Rinehart

A POET'S WOOING.

The modern bard, unworthy of his trust,
  Will not, I fear, inspired assistance get,
For he has trailed the magic lyre in dust
  And left the Muse of Music in a pet;
The rusty strings will yet remain to rust
  Until Apollo sends another set,
And Pegasus, enfeebled, has resigned,
An old, rheumatic creature, stiff and blind.

So there is little use in my inviting
  The Muse invoked by bards in olden time,
To counsel and assist me in inditing
  A story that I long to tell in rhyme,
Nor ask her to accompany my writing
  With that inspiring melody sublime
Which wafted once from her neglected lyre
And kindled latent genius into fire.

'Tis evident, that, writing of a poet,
  The verse is best, for clumsy prose encumbers;
My hero was a bard,—I'd have you know it
  Thus early in the tale;—his boyish slumbers
And waking moments all combined to show it,
  For night and day he dreamed in rythmic numbers,
And built his airy castles full as vain
As frost had painted on the window-pane.

And then, again, the welcome innovation
Of verse within a field of clammy prose,
A happy turn should add to the relation,
For verses have what prose cannot enclose,—
A certain charm, a magical elation
That every lover of the poet knows
And feels, as through his head are ringing
The music notes the bard is gently singing.

I will not lead you to Italian skies
Where blood is ever at the fever heat,
And where the maidens, with consenting sighs,
Surrender hearts that all too warmly beat;
Instead, I shall avoid where danger lies,
And seek the quiet of a country seat
Where purity is always nearly par
And people seem to be just what they are.

Nor shall I add suggestions to my story
That form of modern tales so large a part,
Nor follow rules considered mandatory
That shroud in gloom a pure and tender heart,—
The realistic tale so old and hoary
That aims a blow at the ideal in art;
On reading which we feel ourselves misused,
Our finer sensibilities abused.

It often happens in secluded bowers,
Which authors weave into their modern tales,
Where lovers hie to spend the passing hours
When nothing else so charmingly avails,
That, there among the opiate breathing flowers,
The maiden's coldness youth no more bewails;
These authors make the sweetest flower hurt you
In painting perfume as the foe of virtue.

Nor shall I, as my plot already laid is,
  Portray the castles and the knights of old;
Nor introduce the blase lords and ladies
  That tenanted these palaces so cold;
Nor e'en the youth to fortune born, that paid his
  Accustomed tax to folly to enfold
A titled mistress, legalized by marriage
Where love is nothing but a chance miscarriage.

The world is weary of such sickly stories
  Of love that kindles at the siren's call;
Of love that quickens in conservatories,
  In marbled palace and in pictured hall,
In gilded yachts or fine, upholstered dories,—
  Of love, in fact, that is no love at all;
Of passion that at best is but pollution,
For love, like wine, permits of no dilution.

So, knowing this, I shall proceed to tell
  Of that which more concerns the human heart
Than those conventionalities so well
  Portrayed and well sustained in modern art;
And go with you where loving bosoms swell,
  Where Cupid, only, wings the magic dart,
And sing to you of wooing youth and maid
Whom modesty in love had made afraid.

Ben Bowman passed his youth upon a farm
  Where nature gives the soul its best repose,
Where even solitude enshrines a charm
  The titled monarch never feels and knows;
Where there is but so little that can harm
  And where deception never thrives and grows
And twines itself about the heart so sly
And leaves its victim but a living lie.

His was, perhaps, an unpropitious station,
With nought to boast in either blood or birth;
No famous name among his past relation,—
In fact his family records showed a dearth
Of those who had, through chance or education,
Left something that was tangible to earth,
Although there were perhaps some six or seven
Who laid a few fond treasures up in heaven.

His father did his planting when the moon
Shone with a light propitious on the soil,
Nor would he wean a calf a day too soon,
Because to him the zodiac was Hoyle;
Hostetter's works were always thought a boon
And ruled unchallenged in the realm of toil;
His butchering was moon-timed to a dot
To keep the meat from shrinking in the pot.

The old rail fence was also lunar laid
To keep the worm rail from untimely rot,
And sometimes building had to be delayed
Though all materials were on the spot,
Because, in shingling, he was sore afraid,
Though all was ready, that the moon was not,
And that the shingles when the roof was done,
Would curl and twist beneath the sultry sun.

And thus to kill a hog or drive a tack,
Or plant a tree or even gather hops,
There never was of signs a single lack;
And, if he wanted but a dish of chops,
He must consult the yellow almanac;
To plant or reap the necessary crops
He always had a sign,—a moonlit plan
Extracted from the disembowelled man.

Surroundings such as these can hardly be
  Encouraging to one who strives to rise
Above the drudgery of life, where he
  Has nought above him but the vaulted skies,
And where, with fancy chainless, full and free,
  He measures all the deep immensities,
Absorbing what kind nature has designed
To lift, inspire and vivify the mind.

No fortune had this moonshine farmer hoarded;
  And thus the son grew up inured to toil
And lived alone on what the farm afforded,—
  The recompense to labor from the soil,
Until he went to city schools and boarded
  Where burnished silver was the leading spoil
And where he found provisions dietetic
Too exquisitely dainty and esthetic.

By this this you may infer that country feeding
  Consorted better with his appetite;
And that the city fare, like country breeding,
  Was much too simple for a coarse delight;
And, as I do not wish to be misleading,
  Admit your chance conjecture is quite right,
For no one has a surer way of knowing
The row Ben Bowman won his laurels hoeing.

When through the city schools, his just ambition
  Was centered in a more exhaustive course,
That might, with comprehensive expedition,
  Be compassed in a year or two perforce;
But, owing to exchequor in depletion,
  Although he might have fared a great deal worse,
He was permitted, in his search for knowledge,
A year of strict economy at college.

Returning, he at once engaged in teaching,
A calling that allowed but little rest
And leisure time for dreams, which, over-reaching
The dull monotonies, give life a zest,
And prove, despite the world's prosaic preaching,
That fairy idealities are best,
The ne plus ultra of all cherished goals
That bards have peopled with congenial souls.

But, after all, the body must be fed,
To nurture which the soul remains on earth
To struggle in the daily race for bread;
And, where it must surrender from its birth,
To appetite, the creatures of the head,
Thus oftentimes, the child of boundless worth,
Whatever be its genius and intent,
Is harnessed by its cold environment.

Ben Bowman found this galling, to be sure,
A deadly stroke at his sublime ideal;
But never would he let the Muse allure
His thoughts from things more tangible and real,
For circumstance required that he immure
His kindling fancy, though he keenly feel,
As only poets feel, the struggling strife
That strains and racks imprisoned souls for life.

Thus far he was quite free from love affairs
For one susceptible as poets seem;
And, held in check by clinging daily cares,
He had, at most, but little time to dream;
But what a poet has he always shares,
With one diluted milk, another cream,
And it is no disparagement to say
That he had often pledged his heart away.

When once you know a poet's genial heart
Wherein the fire of love is ever burning,
And where forever Cupid's pleasing art
Is nurtured by a nature always yearning,
You then will best appreciate the mart
To which there flock a thousand maids discerning
And where a dozen pledges, less or more,
Cannot deplete the o'er abundant store.

It chanced, that when in this inviting mood,
Ben Bowman met and loved a kindred flame
Who seemed to him to be the angel food
That put all other soul-food into shame;
Whichever way the bard the maiden viewed,—
Though no one more prosaic could he name,
She seemed divine,—a lovely incarnation
Of all that well could merit adulation.

Maude Mason was as pure and chaste a miss
As ever was encased in breathing clay,
And never did the virgin breezes kiss
Diviner features than upon the day
They rested on her dimpled cheeks in bliss
And with a wealth of perfume stole away
To charm and soothe and awe the poet's soul
And touch his heart and make it clean and whole.

I said that she was pure, that she was chaste;
I mean by this a woman's highest praise,
For no diviner virtues ever graced
Maturing womanhood, and none can raise
To grander heights the reckless, wanton waste
Of sunken manhood to the better ways
Of righteousness, sobriety and truth;
None charm the child or more inspire the youth.

There is a beauty in the grand, old ocean
When calm and still, or rolling mountain high;
There is a beauty in its gliding motion,
And when it seems to leap and touch the sky;
It stirs the human heart to deep emotion
To stand and dream where breakers ever sigh,
And, viewing that sublime, majestic waste,
Recall the thousand hopes it has effaced.

There is a beauty in the constant sun
That woos to bud and bloom a wealth of flowers,
And speeds the breeze to gather one by one
The truant clouds to freshen them with showers
Of pearls that steal away where brooklets run
Through fairy glens and perfume-laden bowers,
Through meadows rare, across the fertile lea
To meet at last and mingle with the sea.

There is a beauty in the star-lit night
When nature softens to a hush and sleep;
There's beauty in the moon's reflected light
Again reflected in the placid deep;
There's beauty on the snow-clad mountain height
Where high-born clouds commune and coldly weep,
Where hoary winter holds a sway eternal
And dawns of splendor greet a scene supernal.

There is a beauty in the northern sky
Where sweet Aurora greets the god of day
On polar seas, to vanish with a sigh
When godlike splendor drives the maid away;
There is a beauty in the flowers that vie
With rainbow-hues born of the sun and spray;
And there is wond'rous beauty where there roves
The ocean fauna through the coral groves.

But after all, when all is seen and said,
  When all external beauties are portrayed
With all the skill of every genius dead
  And all in glowing color is arrayed
And all in harmony together wed,—
  We find the net result to pale and fade
Compared with Chastity's transcendent beauty
That makes respect to womanhood a duty.

So thought my poet hero, for he had
  Seen something of this coldly wicked world;
And though he had not been a sinful lad,
  Had been where decency her banner furled;
Where souls were all surrendered to the bad
  And where he saw each worthy virtue hurled
Like some uncherished, broken toy away
When it no longer seemed to please or pay.

Such knowledge has but one of two results;
  A nature weak is overwhelmed thereby;
The stronger one religiously consults
  The moral sense, that knows where dangers lie,
Then, that which seemed attractive but insults;
  The man who weeps at seeing virtues die
Will leave the dens of vice in deep disgust
At all the vain and vicious wiles of lust.

Ben Bowman kept his morals undefiled
  Through all this dread experience of youth,
Avoiding all, although by all beguiled;
  It all impressed him with the steadfast truth
That chastity, howe'er it be reviled
  By those who have surrendered it forsooth,
Is, after all, a woman's greatest charm
Its loss, the chief, if not her only harm.

He learned to look on woman with suspicion
  Through memories he never could efface,
And diagnose, as would the true physician,
  Conditions that were mirrored in her face;
But now he found a maid where intuition
  Could read the modesty of every grace,
And see in every charming feature fair
The purity that found a lodgement there.

The maiden had a classic education
  And then, besides, she had a classic mind
With high ideals, to which no elevation
  Was ever pitched too high to be divined;
My hero thought the fullest consummation
  Of all his future hopes was here confined
And compassed in a maid whose love and lore
Consorted well with all he could adore.

I said he thought this; but such thoughts are cold
  And such is not a poet's way of thinking;
His thoughts are cast within a warmer mould
  Where calculation into love keeps sinking;
He simply loved, and, like a chain of gold,
  These sober after thoughts came linking
His love to his ideal, for both were free,—
She numbered twenty years, he twenty-three.

He mentally exclaimed when first he met her,
  "There is my wife!"—by far too much on credit;
He wished that it were so, though he knew better,
  But then it was his poet heart that said it;
He thought she caught his thought, he tried to let her,
  And afterward his fertile fancy fed it
Until at last, in thinking he had won her
His vain presumption had almost undone her.

It happened that (and this is melancholy)
When once he paid a visit to his flame,
He found her even more than ever jolly,
Impaling on the wall (O what a shame
It was not mistletoe!) a sprig of holly,
At variance in import as in name;
She greeted him by smiling o'er her shoulder
Which banished diffidence and made him bolder.

With both her arms engaged, he stole behind her,
For love had prompted him to steal a kiss;
Although he could not do an act unkinder,
He caught in quick embrace the charming miss,
And, ere she was aware, a chance reminder
That many maids would never take amiss,
Was planted on the fervid lips inviting
That he had long reproved himself for slighting.

Now who would carp at kissing, when a maiden
As charming as a peri seems to dare it?
And who would dare refuse lips nectar-laden
A kiss, when they are so designed to wear it?
And who, indeed, declines to visit Aiden
And taste of bliss with someone else to share it?
Kind reader, ask yourself, and,—well I know it,—
You can't blame any man, much less a poet.

The best intentions often pass for treason,
And good intentions pave the streets of —well,
It often happens for no worthy reason
That reason is suspended for a spell;
And once forbidden fruit, when out of season,
So tempted father Adam that he fell
As did our hero, who with good intention
Had caused a rumpus of no small dimension.

She turned, and, like a frenzied Fury seeming,
Her throbbing bosom in her anger heaving,
Her dark and lustrous eyes with insult gleaming
Through facial features, where, the color leaving
Revealed the startled bard how far from dreaming
Were all the stern realities of thieving;
And from her livid lips, the soul's detective,
She poured a tireless torrent of invective.

Ben felt a nameless horror thrilling through him
When her insulted majesty arraigned,
And all the charges clung the closer to him
The more the injured maiden had complained;
And yet it seemed the more she would beshrew him
The more he loved the maiden he had pained,
And would repeat again the operation
And offer her his heart-felt consolation.

But when he found at last his halting tongue,
That Shakespeare called the lawyer of the heart,
Or rather "heart's attorney," when were sung
The songs that comprehend all poet's art,
By all the means that in the past have wrung
Forgiveness for a hapless Cupid's dart,
He plead his cause before this injured Fury
Who, in this case, was both the judge and jury.

He begged, that though she did not give consent,
That in behalf of mercy he had erred
And that her undue anger should relent
And all that stood between them be interred;
But, after all his arguments were spent
He found that he had wasted every word
Of his most meek and penitent relation
To win forgiveness and commiseration.

Long, long he argued there his good intention
Reviewing the pathology of kisses,
And other specious pleas I need not mention
And technicalities the juror misses
Who is himself a party in contention;
As "bliss" the only other rhyme for this is,
I scorn to use it and will say instead
He may as well have pleaded to the dead.

When cyclones have passed over all is still,
But wreck and ruin still remain behind;
And, when the maid had tortured to her fill
She would not say a word,—which was unkind,
For, when a woman's mute, plead as you will,
Whate'er you say will never change her mind;
Besides, when ignorant of her true feeling
You may enlarge the breach you're bent on healing.

But all things have an end,—and then my tale;
And so at last her anger had an end,
For things which will not break will hardly fail
With pressure strong enough, at least to bend;
And like a ship that's weathered one fierce gale,
The bard put all to rights, and with the trend
Of favoring winds and tides, his course pursued,
But never after was he quite so rude.

A woman's virtue is her donjon keep,
And taken only when the truant lips,
Her sentinels, are caught at last asleep,—
Intoxicated by the blissful sips
That all-confiding love has drunk too deep;
But, erring once, the rocky fortress tips
And totters, 'til the whole in ruin hurled
Forever lies there open to the world.

Give me the maiden that without defection
Guards well the lips that hold her virgin keys;
That keeps her surging passion in subjection
And too impulsive lovers on their knees,
Denying all, lest there be some infection
That lurks behind the most resistless pleas;
For, should her heart with love grow much too tender
It means intoxication and surrender.

Ben Bowman, though he had been much dejected
When his impulsive love-embrace miscarried
And e'en his kiss was scornfully rejected
(From past experience so widely varied)
The more, if possible, the maid respected;
He knew that long ago he might have married
Had one of three or four been more resistant
And with his high ideal the more consistent.

With all his past experience he knew
The mighty power of presence and persuasion
And that at best the maidens were too few
Who would resent a kiss on such occasion;
And from it all this wise conclusion drew
In which he made no single reservation,
That she was just the one to make of life
A paradise for him who called her "wife."

And so he lived alone when she was near,
And when she was away became dejected;
And soon she had become to him so dear
That every other creature was neglected;
He suffered all the time the haunting fear
That somehow, sometime she might be defected,
And thinking thus, and dreaming thus about her,
He vowed that he would never live without her.

The ship of love has weathered through the years
The calm and storm, the tempest and the gale;
Has floated through the sorrow-seas of tears
And with porpitious winds has spread a sail;
Has swept with speed when time was in arrears
And drifted on, when naught would else avail,
Where tempests lashed and threat'ning billows roared
And yet the Cupid captain shouts "Aboard!"

Where love ordains, no marriage is a crime;
It makes of matrimony that divine
Relationship, in every land and clime,
More sacred and more holy and benign;
Than mere convenience for a given time;—
An idle toy that either can resign;
An obligation that as soon as spoken
Needs only a surrender to be broken.

For wedlock is a sacred institution,
A soul communion of the heart with heart,
To which no court can offer restitution
Because it is of nature, not of art;
A bond that cannot suffer dissolution
'Til death alone, its sacred segments part;
Then damned be he who ever dare disparage
The pure, unsullied sanctity of marriage.

Than woman, there was never creature grander,—
The greatest gift to man through all the years,
Who grows more charming as you understand her
And lovable alike in smiles or tears;
And, though to her we men must often pander
She pays us by each charm that e'er endears
And when we sink below our wonted station
'Tis she alone who offers us salvation.

When summer came and outings were in style,
The lovers sought the Rocky's cooling shade
Where mountain sat on mountain, pile on pile,
The highest peaks in clouds of snow arrayed;
Where lovers might in joy abide awhile;
Where nature's masterpieces are displayed;
Where air and water give to life a zest,
And where to slumber always means to rest.

They stood upon the summit of Pike's Peak,—
Ben Bowman and Maud Mason there alone,
In love enthralled, too charmed and awed to speak
Surmounting that grand monument of stone
Compared to which man seems so poor and weak,—
A Kipling's "rag, a hank of hair, a bone;"
And, while the sun beamed kindly from above,
They stood there in that solitude in love.

Below them lay the everlasting hills;
Above them the eternity of space,—
That deep and vast immensity which thrills;
Below, the panorama of the race,
Where man does what he must, not what he wills;
Where each but seeks until he finds his place,
Forever struggling, all on winning bent,
The many selfish and the few content

Far down below, the pine tree nods and waves,
Inplanted in the firm, eternal rock
Wherein are traced those won'drous mountain caves,
Upheaved and rent in some volcanic shock,
Where miser nature ever hoards and saves
Her crystal wealth of stalactites that mock
The stalagmites which crystallize the tears
That weeping time has shed throughout the years.

They saw, below, the path required to scale
That rocky fortress of enduring stone;
So much like life it seemed,—an up-hill trail
Which each must thread, so selfishly, alone;
Where far too few succeed, too many fail,
And where each cheer is answered by a groan;
Where those who blindly follow erring guides
Can never reach the height where fame abides.

They saw the snake-like railroad wind and creep
Through tunnels long and dark and canons grand;
They saw it, vaulting upward, climb the steep
Where genius would grow dizzy and unmanned;
And then again they saw it overleap
The chasm, where cataracts, by rainbows spanned,
Convey the greeting of the virgin snow
To waiting prairie flowers in meads below.

They viewed the "Snowy Range" where serried peaks
Reflected all the glories of the sun,—
Each pinnacle a sentinel who speaks
Of an eternity while time shall run,
Of hidden wealth awaiting him who seeks,
Where even Monte Cristo is outdone;
Of Cripple Creek, by mountain streamlets fed,
Which nestled snugly in its golden bed.

They looked on classic lakes where melting snows
Have poured their flood of tears into the deeps
From which a lucent, leaping streamlet flows
Through rocky ways, and grandly overleaps
The cataract's restraining walls, and goes
To whisper gently where the maiden reaps
A harvest of the choicest summer flowers
In perfumed glens and fairy woodland bowers.

They stood there in that grandeur unexcelled,
At peace with all the world, above its strife;
All earthly thoughts and actions were dispelled,
Infinity had entered in their life;
She leaned upon his shoulder, while he held
Her hand in his and whispered, "Be my wife,"
And silently she raised her head in bliss
And gave the bard her answer in a kiss.

TO MINNEHAHA.

Old Nokomis' widowed daughter,
Wilt thou speak to me?
Minnehaha, weeping water,
I would learn of thee;
Tell me of thy Hiawatha—
Of thy loved one—Minnehaha,
And the peace thy love,
Be it truth or be it fiction,
Brought so like a benediction
From the gods above.

Tell to me thy magic story,
How throughout the years
Thou sustainest youth and glory
Dazzling through thy tears;
Tears for thy lost Hiawatha
Well become thee, Minnehaha,
Well become the bride—
Sainted bride and widowed daughter,
Mirrored in the weeping water
Since thy laughter died.

Wander where the vine is creeping
And the willows climb,
Never cease thou in thy weeping
'Til the end of time;
Time can give to age its wrinkle,
But it cannot dim the twinkle
Love lights in the eye;
Love makes sanctity of sorrow,
Love abides today, tomorrow,
Love can never die.

ROBERT BURNS.

There is within the human heart
A soulfulness that yearns
For that sublime and pleasing art
Which culminates in Burns;
And so today the world will pay
The tribute it discerns
Is justly due the poet true,
Congenial Robert Burns.

Well may the Scot reflect with pride
Upon his native land,
For fame has published far and wide
Achievements great and grand;
She may display a proud array
Of patriots brave and strong,
But none there be so grand as he
Who conquers with his song.

His verse is musical, though sad,
Or merry be its chime,

And man and wife and lass and lad
  Are better for his rhyme;
And all the years through smiles and tears
  His songs and simple art,
Will be endeared and more revered,
  Because they reach the heart.

With tenderness almost divine,
  His simple, loving strains
Will wield a potency benign
  As long as true love reigns;
And so for aye this honored day,
  Till time at last adjourns,
Is set apart to soulful art
  And charming Robert Burns.

January 25, 1895.

THE FUTURE.

There's a sweet little fairy that sings in my ear
  Of the future—the glorious future,
When woman will fill a far different sphere,
  In the future—the unshackled future;
And she sings of a time in the sweet bye and bye,
When a glad hallelujah will mount to the sky,
Proclaiming the freedom of lowly and high
  From the thralldom of fad in the future.

It is sometimes pathetic the song that she sings
  Of the future—the heart-breaking future;
When woman will banish all loud, gaudy things
  In the future—the unfeeling future;
When dress will be made on the order of sense,

To increase convenience and lessen expense,
And fashion and folly and ignorance dense
Will all be unknown in the future.

Then again she will sing in a jollier vein
Of the future—the happier future;
When marriage will not be a contract for gain,
In the future—the franchising future;
But woman will be the full equal of man
And marry for love—if she luckily can—
And the unmarried all will be under the ban
In the sweet, blissful state of the future.

DRESS REFORM.

It is feared that sometime woman,
Through conventional duress,
Will burst in manly splendor
In a bifurcated dress;
And the thought provokes amazement
And chagrin to lordly man,
Who usurps as much prerogative
As selfish beings can.

'Tis a sad humiliation,
Men reluctantly confess,
That Eve, and likewise Adam,
Wore abbreviated dress—
Cut and made in such a fashion
That it could no modiste vex,
And no fad, nor whim, nor passion,
Made the garb describe the sex.

The Arab, with his pantaloons,
  The Scotchman, with his kilt,
The Turk, with baggy trousers,
  Gives our agument a tilt
When we claim that man's pre-emption
  To the proud domain of pants
Is beyond the hope of contest
  By his sisters and his aunts.

But the meanest pill to swallow,
  And a killing one, I ween,
Is that pants were the invention
  Of a very ancient queen;
And upon the field of battle
  There was seen with shield and lance
A host of shapely Amazons,
  And all arrayed in pants.

SHALL WOMAN PROPOSE?

I oft recall how discomposed
  And how perplexed in mind
I found myself when I proposed
  To best of womankind;
Though happy the reply received
  'Twas awkward what I said,
And I indeed had been relieved
  Had she proposed instead.

So, with this Banquo's ghost in view,
  I envy future man,
For then the woman will pursue

A more aggressive plan,
And ask the man whom she would wed
As one of her just dues;
For, has it not been wisely said,
"The beggar should not choose?"

A maiden can, with charming grace
And artlessness divine,
Upon youth's shoulder hide her face
And whisper, "Love, be mine;"
O how sublime were such request,
And how entrancing—ah!
To fold her fondly to your breast
And answer her, "Ask pa!"

ROOSTING HIGH.

There are some who find this life at the best a dismal strife,
And, struggling for existence, wonder why
When the pangs of hunger keen are the sharpest it is seen
The fattest turkeys all are roosting high.

For at least a week or more all our city's worthy poor
Have thought of this Thanksgiving with a sigh;
And with plain and scanty fare, in their hovels thin and bare,
They have wondered why the turkeys roost so high.

If this age is grandly rife with amenities of life
And charity was never born to die—
It is very safe to say it will find a chance today
To reach the turkeys roosting awful high.

It were worth the cost and more just to glance behind the door
And see the children make the turkey fly—
Though in quite another way than a week ago today
When the creature made his perch so dreadful high.

November, 1895.

WHAT IS GENIUS?

It is but tact and talent hand in hand,
The sense to comprehend, the skill to use;
It pays a mental draft made on demand
And promptly meets occasion with its dues.

It is the partnership of thought and toil,
The true love match of industry and sense;
The highest product of the air and soil
Where nature pays to work its recompense.

'Tis not the pampered child of pomp and power,
Nor yet the spawn of pedigree and place;
But all the great requirements of the hour
It has the born nobility to face.

It is the off-spring of the frost and sun,
And, cradled in the forests and the fields,
It is by many wooed, but seldom won,
And then to worth and work alone it yields.

'Tis reared around the fireside of the home,
And touched to tenderness at sight of flow'rs;
It is by beauty charmed, and loves to roam
Where happy music speeds the passing hours.

With blood untraced to pompous prince or peer,
It boasts of no distinction due from birth,
But, grandly reaching upward year by year,
Achieves of fame the measure of its worth.

A WANING ART.

Hushed are the muses of Pope, Burns and Byron,
Wooed long in vain by the magazine bard;
Nothing is heard but the wails of a siren,
Meterless, measureless, motiveless, marred.

Lost is the art of divinely inspiring—
Lost in the night of stupidity dense;
Vanished the bard who is worthy admiring,
Vanished the riches of beauty and sense.

O for a bard with a measure inviting!
Bard with the grace of simplicity terse;
Replacing the boor who is busy inditing
Vapid, insipid, ambiguous verse.

O for a verse that is pregnant with meaning!
Rhymic, though merry or sad be its chime;
O for a verse to sublimity leaning,
Sweetly pathetic and soul-stirring rhyme!

O for a bard with intuitive knowing!
O for a bard who can touch us to tears!
O for a song from a heart over-flowing!
O for a song that will live through the years!

A PHOTOGRAPH OF HOLMES.

I love to trace within that face
  Each noble feature grand—
An open book wherein to look
  Is but to understand;
There's not a hint of lurking guile
  To mar the glad effect,
And that paternal, kindly smile
  Wins our deserved respect.

High in the rank of manly, frank
  And justly honored men,
With charming grace he holds a place
  Acquired with modest pen;
He grandly won his meed of fame
  Because enshrined in him
Were virtues such as made his name
  True honor's synonym.

With purest thought he wrote and taught
  In easy flowing verse,
And not a note in all he wrote
  Could make mankind the worse;
The wholesomeness within each line,
  And softened tenderness,
With potency almost divine
  Will ever charm and bless.

Within an age considered sage,
  But rife with vain pretense,
'Tis sweet to find this noble mind,
  So rich in chaste good sense,

Which found in plain and simple speech
A wealth of warp and woof
To weave a tale and gently teach
A moral or reproof.

CHIEF WAR EAGLE.

As I stood by the grave of this worm-eaten brave
I somehow grew pensive and sad;
For there lay a buck who had once run amuck,
But they gathered him home to his dad—
To lodge with his lousy old dad.

He's as dead as a stone, and in justice I own
A very good Indian no doubt;
And there he must lie till old Gabriel on high
With a deep trumpet blast calls him out—
With a loud trumpet blast calls him out.

No more to his call will his followers all
Assemble in battle array;
No more will they dance in a rapturous trance
O'er victims they caught in the fray –
With scalps they secured in the fray.

Entombed with the dead is his tomahawk dread,
His scalping knife rusts by his side;
The river runs still while he lies on the hill,
Nor reckons the course of its tide—
The requiem groans of its tide.

If true what they say, on awakening day,
When e'en the most villainous quakes,
His string-haltered hops and his tomahawk chops
Will all be repaid in hot stakes—
The devil's own simmering stakes.

Sioux City, Ia., July 1895.

CIRCUS DAY.

The circus man, who never fails to show sometime in May,
Will always meet a welcome, for he brings a holiday,
When Maude can dress in white as pure as her sweet soul and fair,
And I can wear my hand-me-downs without a rip or tear.

Oft, hand in hand, a loving pair, we've sauntered down the streets,
I spending money like a prince for chewing gum and sweets,
And popcorn balls and peanuts and chromatic lemonade,
As down into the big white tent we followed the parade.

We saw the camel and the bear, the elk and kangaroo,
The ugly hippopotamus, the llama from Peru,
The lion and the leopard and the tiger and giraffe,
And lingered 'round the monkeys' cage to laugh and laugh and laugh.

And then into the circus tent with all the crowd we pressed,
And perched upon the highest seat and thought it much the best,
We saw the famous acrobats, the donkey and the clown,
And stayed to hear the concert played by "artists of renown."

And when the whole was over, and we stepped into the dark,
We talked about the circus as we walked along to spark;
We loitered by the wayside, for we had so much to say,
And found the distance much too short, although the longest way.

Then came the hand-squeeze at the gate, and then the goodnight kiss–
Repeated Oh! so often, though it never came amiss;
And when at last, with heart aflame, I saw her break away,
I wished the speedy coming of another circus day.

DID YOU EVER GO A WHEELING?

Did you ever go a wheeling when the roads were smooth and nice?
It is finer sport than hunting—yes, or skating on the ice,
For it's very near to flying as you noiselessly proceed;
Simply following the pedals at a trotting horse's speed.

On the highway sweetly soaring and a gliding through the glade,
You are happy in the sunshine and appreciate the shade.
You can talk about your fishing and your boating on the lake,
But for jolly sport I'm thinking 'cycle riding takes the cake.

There is action for the muscles and a breath of country air,
And a healthy-hued complexion and a symmetry most fair,
And a grumpy, sour dyspeptic or a pale consumptive can
In but a season's riding feel vitality again.

Did you ever lose your appetite and nothing tasted right?
The wheel will bring it back again in majesty and might;
And there's not a law to hinder you from eating once your fill
If you have the cash to liquidate a mighty grocers' bill.

There's a happy time a coming when the ladies all can feel
At liberty to ride aright the sweet, seductive wheel,
In a neat, convenient garment well adapted in its way
To give the greatest comfort—and may heaven haste the day.

Soon the "good roads" agitation will be crystalized to law,
And if we always keep the right the old "road hog" may jaw,
And although it may be grudgingly, you bet he'll go us halves,
And we'll only have to look out for the dog that nips our calves.

THE INTERSTATE FAIR.

Just o'er the brow of yonder hill
That greets the beams of rising sun,
His requiem the river's trill,
There rests the crumbling bones of one*
Who led a band of painted braves,
That sleeps at last in unknown graves—
It's race is run.

The Star of Empire westward moved
And lit these forests, streams and plains,
Where plucky pioneers since proved
That by the help of lab'ring swains,
The dreary waste of long ago
Can in the blush of plenty glow—
While Ceres reigns.

Like specters in the desert wild,
Great cities upward reared their spires;
And furnace smoke by thrift beguiled
Upwafts where once were wigwam fires;
And through that once dread solitude
Both smiling peace and plenty brood—
All man requires.

*Chief War Eagle, Sioux City, Ia.

The earth, responsive to the plow,
  Yields recompense to worthy toil;
And ev'ry granary and mow
  Bears evidence of fruitful soil;
Where once the hunted bison fed
Now graze the sheep and kine instead—
    None dare despoil.

From all that vast, extensive wealth
  Of empire, with each pulse in touch,
Is gathered here in hues of health
  A little mite of mighty much;
Mute witnesses, unsworn forsooth,
Who never speak a base untruth —
    We trust in such.

Four splendid states join hand in hand,
  Displaying products rich and rare;
Extending all, from every land,
  A cordial welcome to our Fair.
Where wrong impressions are dispelled
By an exhibit unexcelled—
    If equalled, where?

A wealth of sun and air as pure
  As e'er refreshed the paling cheek;
Abundant rain and crops, as sure
  As those of any land we seek—
Why should we not rejoice today
While potent plenty wields its sway
    For one short week?

We dedicate these grounds and halls
  That all our varied fruits adorn
To him whose kingdom never falls—

His majesty, the great King Corn,
Let us to him our tribute pay,
And all make merry while we may,
And sadness scorn.

MY CORN COB PIPE.

The joy of my life is my corn cob pipe,
The source of a magic art;
From its strength supreme and its age full ripe
I have sworn that I must part.

So, my friend, farewell; I have loved thee long,
Thou hast been most good to me,
And I feel that many an idle song
Is owing, my pipe, to thee.

Thou hast often banished my weight of care,
And soothed with a fond caress,
And though we part, I am ready to swear
That I love thee none the less.

Ere I give thee up I must fill thy bowl,
And court my favorite Muse,
For I need the cheer of a genial soul
Whenever I have the blues.

I will soar again in those fleecy clouds,
And build my castles of air,
And revel in bliss while the maze enshrouds,
Inhaling an incense rare.

So, my pipe, farewell to our plighted troth,
Though it cost me many a tear,
I have sworn and now I must keep my oath,
For this is the glad New Year.
Jan. 1. 1895.

ARISTOCRACY.

We often meet with those who cringe and crawl
Before the base Beelzebub of caste;
And fondle, flatter, fete and servile fall
Upon their knees to those who in the past
Debased, debauched and damned themselves for gold
And ne'er redeemed the sordid souls they sold.

We see the snobs of style with sense suppressed
Who bow to fashion, worshipping a fad;
Bright butterflies when draperied and dress'd,
But crawling caterpillars when unclad,
In whom there ever uppermost appears
The clinging chrysalis of early years.

The pomp and pretense of the purse-proud prude,
With wealth patrician but plebian taste,
Whose dazzling diamonds everywhere protrude,
Can but provoke the pity of the chaste
And sensibly and womanly who know
The shallow mockery of vulgar show.

Mistaken men embezzle and defraud
To keep themselves within a social sphere
Where glint and glare and glitter, gilt and gaud

May win a glance although it cost a tear,
And, with their burdened hearts of guilt and guile,
They ape the spotted siren known as style.

They all scorn honest Labor, galled and gaunt,
The tired, troubled tool of trade and toil;
A wealth of worth, but worn by work and want
In building hopes that others may despoil,
Who coin his brain and brawn and blood and bones,
And feast and fatten on his sighs and groans.

There's no true aristocracy but worth,
No proud distinction but deserved success;
For, at the best, all men are of the earth
And earthly yet remain howe'er they dress;
Their characters are certain to appear
Whatever be their outward garb and gear.

THE RIVALS.

I confess, my love, that today I met
A charming blonde and a sweet brunette
Who promised their love to me;
And the eyes of black and the eyes of blue
Revealed a love that I know is true
As ever true love can be.

And somehow, love, by some magic art,
These maids have wooed and have won my heart,
Have wooed and have won my love;

The one with the black eyes beaming true,
The other with eyes like the azure blue
Serene in the skies above.

While I love the eyes that are black as jet,
And the beautiful, blue-eyed, sweet coquette,
My love is no less for you,
Than in years agone when we lived alone
And the only black eyes were your own
And there were no eyes of blue.

Though pledged to me, yet the greatest debt,
Of the charming blonde and the sweet brunette
Is owing, my love, to you,
Who will best console in the coming years
When the eyes of black will be filled with tears
And tears in the eyes of blue.

And sometime, love, though the thought is sad,
Some lad will come, then another lad
Will come as I came for you,
And rob us both of our loves, alack!
The one with the beautiful eyes of black,
The other with eyes of blue.

WAPELLO.

Above the Court of Justice stands
A statue that enshrines the fame
Of one* who bore through all these lands,
With dignity, a chieftain's name.

*Chief of the Ottumwas.

Alone in bronze, his native hue,
He can be seen for miles around,
Forever in his stolid view
His erstwhile happy hunting ground.

A monarch that the hand of fate
Was destined to at last depose,
Who lived to see his realm of state
The home and camping-ground of foes.

In war-like attitude is he,
Defiance pictured on his brow;
He flashes scorn on you and me
From eyes reproving even now.

Could life but animate that frame
What changes would those eyes behold!
A city here, with life aflame,
Cast wholly in the civil mold:

The wigwam vanished once for all,
His tribe all numbered with the dead;
No braves to answer to his call,
The din of trade resounds instead.

But there he stands, a sterling plea
For justice that he never knew;
A mute reminder all may see
Outlined in Heaven's azure blue.

OPTIMIST AND PESSIMIST.

The optimist with happy eyes
Sees life in rosy hues,

He has no melancholy ties
And never has the blues.

The pessimist, though seeming cold,
In sympathy is kind,
And all the nobler thoughts unfold
Within his busy mind.

We need the man who makes us laugh
But he is doubly grand,
Whose sympathy provides a staff
Or lends a helping hand.

THE STORM.

Clouds converge,
Shadows merge
Into one;
Gleaming light
Cleaves the night
With its somber shades asunder,
Then a rumbling peal of thunder
And the storm,
Summer storm,
Has begun.
With a gentle pitter-patter
Down the raindrops fall and batter
On the roof and leaves and clatter
Spatter, scatter;
Scarcely audible at first,
Then downpouring with a burst

While the wind is weirdly moaning
And the gale-tossed trees are groaning
As distressed,
With unrest.
Then a frightening
Flash of lightning
Fills the soul with very awe,
And it shudders like the leaves;
While the rumbling and the rolling
Of the thunder in its bowling
Are but meagrely consoling
To the bosom in its awe,—
To the bosom as it trembles while it heaves.

Forms grotesque,
Picturesque,
Here and there
In the night
Recondite,
Scarcely seen within the glimmer
Of the transient lightning's shimmer
Ere they fade
Ghostly fade
Into air;
Then the elements contending
With a fury never ending,
Gather with renewed offending,
Blending, rending!
As if warring to the death
Never pausing for a breath;
Lo! the storm cloud upward riding
From the battle ground is gliding
Wind oppressed
And distressed;

Thus pursuing
All-imbruing,
Cloud and wind and storm are gone
And a quiet fills the night;
While the raindrops are down-dripping,
From the eaves and tree-tops slipping
And the storm is onward skipping,
All the sleepy stars then yawn,
All the merry stars then twinkle in delight.

THE FARMER.

Year in, year out, he woos the soil,
Which, welcoming his suit,
Repays by yielding to his toil
Its recompense of fruit.

His hands are roughened, and his face
Is browned by wind and sun;
His health is rich enough to grace
The labor he has done.

Unused to highly cultured speech
And strange to fine address,
He yet is well equipped to teach
The worth of manliness.

His life is one of honest work,
He reaps just what he sows,
No obligation does he shirk,
Where duty calls he goes.

His dignity is that of worth,—
The pride derived from toil;
The peer of those of highest birth,
For all are of the soil.

WOMAN.

Could I command impressive speech
That speech I would command
To voice a tribute that would teach
So all could understand
How women has, through all the years,
In every land and clime
By other means than smiles and tears
Left some event to time.

Were I the Raphael of verse,
The Angelo of rhyme,
I'd form and shape in language terse
And tell in speech sublime,
How like an angel from above
Since time its course began
She wrought her lasting works of love
And ministered to man.

Could I employ the sacred Muse
To sing her highest praise,
Or could I but as deftly use
The lyre Apollo plays,
I'd fill the air with paeans grand,
Her virtues to proclaim,
And tell what her inspiring hand
Has left to deathless fame.

Could I coin words that would enthral
And words that would caress
And words that like a cadence fall
To soothe and awe and bless,
I then might worthy tribute pay
To all those women who
Deserve a most inspiring lay
For what they did and do.

Sweet Singer, lift your charming voice
And happiness prolong;
Let man in ecstacy rejoice
While women lives in song;
Deft Player, touch Apollo's lyre
And cast a potent spell,
Pray, summon all your genius' fire
And then her virtues tell.

Skilled Painter, snatch prismatic hues
And paint for future fame,
An angel for your model choose
And paint to win a name;
Famed Sculptor, shape a marble form
That seems to breathe and speak,
Inspire with grace that will conform
To the ideal you seek.

Blest Bard pour out your soul in rhyme—
The life's blood of your muse,—
No inspiration less sublime
Is worth the theme I choose;
But yet the most consummate art
Of all your honored line,
Can only meagerly impart
A woman's charms divine.

THE PRAIRIE DOG.

He plats a town upon the plain
And booms it in advance of man
Without a thought of hope of gain
By giving lots to all his clan.

Erect he stands upon his feet,
Alert with ever watchful eyes;
Nor cares he for the county seat,
Or bonded railroad's coming ties.

Ambition has no charm for him,—
Proud peer of socialistic clan;
No office-seeking fad nor whim
Could make of him an alderman.

Without the selfish greed of men,
No fortune does he hoard and save;
He lives contented in his den,
And dying finds a ready grave.

THE AURORA.

Unabating, scintillating,
Effervescing fount of light!
So like dreaming seems thy gleaming
To the glad, enraptured sight.

On the polar seas, where solar
Light prolongs its ebb and flow,
How entrancing is thy dancing
O'er the wastes of ice and snow!

Sudden starting rays are darting
From the earth to azure blue,
Like revolving and dissolving
Panoramas to the view.

Ever changing, re-arranging,
Never seeming twice the same,
Upward dashing like the flashing
Of volcanic fire and flame.

Fading, blazing, through amazing
Transformations in the sky;
Gorgeous crescent, evanescent
Burst of beauty born to die!

Brightly beaming, grandly gleaming,
Radiant, effulgent light;
Greeting morning and adorning
All the majesty of night.

THE SPRITE'S LOVE SONG.

Fay so pretty,
Fay so witty,
Come and listen to my ditty!
Were my heart as yours so gay
I could sing a sweeter lay.
Come with sprightly
Step and lightly,
Let thy presence shining brightly

Permeate my soul with light
That without thee is but night.

Eyes so dreamy,
Hair so streamy,
Like the mellow moonlight gleamy!
Like the ether in its flow
Radiant and all aglow!
Fay so merry,
Fay so wary,
On our pinions light and airy
Let us soar above the sea,
Let us hover o'er the lea!

Come my fairy,
Do not tarry,
Do not be of love so chary
For my heart has wooed thee long
In the rhapsodies of song.
From the flowers
In love's bowers,
Jemmed with jewels from the showers,
I have woven garlands rare
Fit to crown a brow so fair.

Lightly gliding,
Chasing, hiding,
Or in happiness abiding
In the sweetly perfumed dells
As our own caprice impels;
Ever smiling,
Care beguiling,
Through eternity of whiling,
I a king and you a queen,
Let us live in love serene!

ALL ALONE.

In a rich, sequestered grotto
'Mid the perfumed mountain dells
Where the whispers echo sotto,—
There a charming fairy dwells,—
There a charming little fairy dwells alone.

O'er the portals of the palace
Of this fairy maiden fair
Many a flower from its chalice
Breathes an incense on the air,—
Breathes an incense where this fairy dwells alone.

In this palace house of pleasures
Where no evil e'er befalls,
Rich and sparkling jeweled treasures
Glint and glimmer on the walls,—
Glint and glimmer where the fairy dwells alone.

And beneath this fairy castle
There are buried heaps of gold
Guarded by a dwarfish vassal,
Grim and terrible and bold,
Guarded by a dwarfish vassal all alone.

Though I would not storm her castle,
Richer far than any art;
And I dare not brave her vassal,
I am bound to storm her heart,
For my charming fairy must not dwell alone.

MY GRANDFATHER'S GHOST.

I abhor all superstition;
But, by birth or intuition,
My brain has long been haunted by a phantom I detest;
And from no mere supposition
I announce an apparition
That has made of my condition but a misery at best.

When I make this sad admission
I would give my deposition
That I've neither monomania nor wheels within my head;
But I hold to the position
That it is an imposition
To get a promonition or a visit from the dead.

It has been my high ambition
To engage in demolition
Of fallacies and fantasies that throng the human mind;
And my entire composition
Clamors for the abolition
Of the ghosts that make perdition of the life of all mankind.

So with such a disposition
Bent on such a worthy mission,
It cannot but be galling to receive among my woes,
In a logical rendition
A convincing exposition
And a virtual admission of the doctrine I oppose.

Never by my own volition
Would I welcome repetition,
Of the visits, nightly visits of my puritanic ghost;

Whose career of deep contrition
Ought to make him an addition
And a prominent musician in the vast, angelic host.

I appeal to the logician
And all men of erudition
To tell why I should suffer, for the space of twenty years,
From a ghostly expedition
That without an intermission,
And without my own permission, has tormented me with fears.

I implore a requisition
For the permanent remission
Of the dread, nocturnal visits of this antiquated shade;
But I have a slight suspicion
That it seeks my recognition
To air a proposition that, to hear, I am afraid.

SLANDER.

Confess I must, and for forgiveness hope,
When wanting food, I shot an antelope,
Which wounded, fell, and writhing where it lay,
Tried long in vain to rise and limp away.

It raised its eyes appealingly to me,
And, mirrored in their depths, I seemed to see
Reproachful innocence; and then it stirred
And gave the saddest wail I ever heard.

I felt as one must feel who trembling stands
Above the victim murdered by his hands,
And hears, transfixed, that weird and smothered cry,
That from the mind of guilt can never die.

Too often deadly messengers are sent
At innocence, with more unjust intent;
Which like a leaden bullet, pierce and maim
A human soul both pure and free from blame.

THE SUICIDE.

'Tis midnight and the little Hamlet sleeps;
No sound is heard of hurried tread;
The passing river slowly winds and creeps
Around the village like a thread,
And softly shimmers in the mellow light
Reflected from the tranquil orb of night.

Upon the bridge that spans the placid stream
There flits a form so spectre-like
It seems the phantom of a transient dream,
So wierd, uncanny does it strike
The watcher who observes it hover there
A troubled spirit in the darkened air.

It moves, it halts, it shudders! as inclined
To some most terrifying deed,
Impelled by some distressing state of mind;—
Distracted so it will not heed
The voice of conscience, which in vain condemns,
So much the awful stress of woe o'erwhelms.

Again it glides, and then it stops once more
O'er midstream, just between the piers,
And then again it trembles as before
In pain severe, too deep for tears,
It seems the crushing weight of grief alone
Has driven reason from its wonted throne.

The shrouding mantle is now cast aside
And there a woman stands revealed,
Within whose bosom ebbs and flows a tide
Too violent to keep concealed,
While in her arms, enwrapped in slumbers mild,
There lies the child of guilt yet guiltless child.

She clasps it to her heart again, again,
And pours her soul upon its lips;
Impulsively she fondles it, and then
She climbs the rail and, tearless, slips,
With babe in arms, into the fleeting wave
To hide dishonor in a nameless grave.

AMBITION.

I love to meet aspiring youth
Because in him I find
A potency that will forsooth
Unfold a useful mind.

I love to listen to the voice
Of his ambition keen,
And hear him make decided choice
Of some vocation clean.

The possibilities of years
Are cradled in his brain;
A wealth of smiles, a sea of tears
Are his to lose or gain.

With fate and fortune in his hands
He carves his own career;

His fame may reach to foreign lands
  Or it may perish here.

Whate'er the future yields, we know
  That he will act aright
Through all the years of weal or woe,
  According to his light.

MY PAINTERS.

There is a painter who paints for me,
  And he poorly paints by day,
But paints at night with a fiendish glee
  As wierdly as did Dore.

When twilight comes with its soothing spell
  And care has my last adieus;
On canvas black, like an imp of hell,
  He flashes his lurid hues.

Whenever his scenes grow dim and faint
  My spirit will darkly brood;
And every change that he cares to paint
  Is met with a changing mood.

I think my painter would fain portray
  And picture my heart's desire,
That glows, then glimmers and fades away
  So like the inconstant fire.

There is another who paints for me,
  With a skill almost divine,
With a touch of art and a fancy free,
  And a grace and charm benign.

He paints alone in the winter time,
And travels the wide world o'er,
To keep in touch with the genial clime
That treasured his work before.

He paints by day and he paints by night
Whenever the cold is keen
And leaves a picture of crystal white
And shimmering silver sheen.

I think this painter no ill can mean,
For though in despair I be,
He traces with masterly skill a scene
Auspicious with hope to me.

THE MAGIC STEED.

A monarch said, "Give me a steed
That can attain the highest speed
And never feel the slightest need
That man or beast can feel."
A genius rare at once began
To form and shape and plot and plan
The greatest gift to mortal man,—
The swift and silent wheel.

He made it with a diamond frame
And gave to it an awkward name
And brought it all submissive, tame,
Before the mighty king;
Said he, "Here is a creature fair
Without a feather or a hair
Will bear your highness through the air
Although it has no wing.

A creature that is never fed,
Without a tail, without a head,
That never wearies when it's sped
  Although it's always tired;
Though light it bears a heavy load
In safety over any road
And always goes without a goad
  Wherever it's desired.

It cannot paw, nor fume and fret
Nor wet itself with foam and sweat,
It has a giant's strength and yet
  It's slender as a spider;
Though often sought, it never seeks,
Though it has spokes it never speaks
Although it sometimes dryly squeaks
  A warning to its rider."

A moment there the monarch gazed,
With wonderment and awe amazed
And then triumphantly he raised
  The genius to renown;
Proposing this deserving toast,—
"The magic steed we love the most
That ever like a Banquo's Ghost
  Is up and will not down."

DAWN.

Rising early, sweet Aurora,
  With her golden, streamy hair
Soft and silky as angora,
  As the goddess Venus fair;

Woos the glances of the sun
Courtly sun!
Woos the fond, admiring glances of the sun.

From his oriental splendor
With his retinue of rays
And a love-light beaming tender
Forth he comes through golden ways
To greet his love from frost-land,
Snowy land!
To greet his charming sweetheart of the frost-land.

From his presence, kingly, stately,
All the lesser lights retire;
Calmly, gracefully, sedately,
He proceeds in rich attire
And gathers up the dew-jems,
Pretty jems!
And gathers all the brilliant, sparkling dew-jems.

Warm and tender is their meeting
Each with radiance aglow,
And the kiss exchanged in greeting
Is as pure as virgin snow,
When Aurora meets the sun,
Happy sun!
Meets the rapturous embraces of the sun.

As she welcomes his advances
She is radiant with light,
So resplendent in her glances
And so artless in delight;

She is happy with the sun,
Gentle sun!
With the tender, chaste caresses of the sun.

For awhile in love ecstatic
They commune in silent bliss;
Then Aurora,—so erratic,—
With a final melting kiss
Has evanished from the sun
Careless sun!
From the warm and clinging kisses of the sun.

MUTATION.

I sat at my window in long ago
Mid deafening noise and din,
And I saw the traffic to and fro
And thought how it might have been
Had some genius born with inventive power
Met the stern demands of the day and hour.

I sit at my window again today
And see all that passes by,
Though it does not go in the same old way
It did in the days gone by,
With the constant tramp of the hoofs that beat
Through the devious ways of the stony street.

A genius came and transformed the scene
And banished the noise for aye,
Though many more than of yore I ween

Are passing along this way;
But the horse has gone for the steed of steel
And the people pass on the silent wheel.

My hair is sprinkled a bit with gray
And wrinkles are on my brow,
But I feel as young as I did the day
I looked on the street as now,
For I now rejoice in a vigor rare
As I glide awheel through the country air.

AN AUTUMN SUNSET.

Within the ruddy glow
On the horizon low,
A dark cloud
Is mirrored in the azure of the west;
And its somber shadow falling
Forms a contrast most appalling
With the halos brightly outlined on its crest.

In all the rainbow tints
The sun-dog gleams and glints
Through the haze
Obscuring half the splendor of the sun;
But although his light is duller
There's a majesty of color
And a mellow evanescence he has won.

The sun sinks in the sea,
The golden, gleaming sea,
And the glow
Is waning in the occidental sky,

And the vision of his treasures
Like a dream of joyous pleasures,
Fading, leaves us but a memory and sigh.

The night comes on apace
And wraps in its embrace
The still earth
To slumber till the morning light shall break;
But the frosty distillation
And the starry scintillation
Keep a twinkling at each other wide awake.

SMOKING MY LIFE AWAY.

I'm feeling so sad today,—
So sad and undone today,—
For I hourly nurse a destroying curse
That's smoking my life away;
Smoking my life away
And leading my will astray,
For I've lost the whole of my self-control
While smoking my life away.

Invoke me a curse today,—
A curse on the tyrant's sway,
On the subtle power that each day and hour
Is smoking my life away;
Smoking my life away,
While I am a helpless prey
To the soothing spell that I know full well
Is smoking my life away.

So costly the price I pay,
For, ever from day to day,
I am breathing death in each poisoned breath
While smoking my life away;
Smoking my life away,
From now 'till my dying day,
I will feel the need of the deadly weed
That's smoking my life away.

A LAMENTATION.

Today I searched the "standard" magazines
In hope, perchance, to find a bit of verse,—
Some simple, sweet expression, pointed, terse,
Expressing sentiments, portraying scenes
Wherein the thought was even well expressed,
But found them most insipid at the best.

What editor is there these modern times,
Can sense a worthy poem when he reads;
Or comprehend that which the public heeds,
Or draw the line that bars all stilted rhymes
And welcome those alone, wherein there blends
The thought and dress that justify their ends?

To gauge their scope by what they all accept,
These editors are but a sorry set;
Declining all the worthy "with regret;"
Through all their short-lived columns there has crept
That only, which, of all that comes to hand,
They had the hardest work to understand.

Poor Byron could not write such wretched stuff,
  Nor Pope, nor Burns, nor even Edgar Poe,
Who wrote his verses in a metric flow
  Nor sought to leave his diamonds in the rough
So mental experts, only, could detect
The value that all others least expect.

The "Psalm of Life" would be returned with thanks
  "The Barefoot Boy" would meet an equal fate;
The "Elegy" of Gray, "The Ship of State"
  And all such simple, sentimental pranks, —
For which poor Pegasus must take the blame,—
Could through no "standard" magazine reach fame.

THE BETHROTHAL RING.

When Cupid dwelt in the fairy land,
  The mythical realm above;
He sealed his heart in an endless band
And placed the ring on his true-love's hand,—
  On Psyche the soul of love;
Such constancy did this treasure bring,
  Such joy in the love-sworn oath,
So close, indeed, did the lovers cling
That ever since has the magic ring
  Been sacred to plighted troth.

As the rainbow hangs in the misty air
  A symbol of sweet portent
That holds the beacon of hope to prayer,
A joyful promise to sad despair,

Wherever its hues are bent;
The ring, enclosing the shapely form
Of the maiden's finger, stands
For constancy in the calm or storm,
A guide and gauge to the pulses warm
That throb in a thousand lands.

Were it endowed with the gift of sense
What stories it could unfold!
Of love receiving its recompense
In a pressure tender, warm, intense,
That the soul can not withhold;
Of faith and trust in the pledge of love,
Of ever attentive care;
Of cooings sweet as the artless dove,
Of purity like the stars above,
And of kisses chaste as air.

THE BLACKMAILER.

I look upon his face—a hypocrite
With aspect sinister; a snake-like gleam
Is in his eye; his venomous tongue is fit
To lap the putrid scum from Stygian stream
Or furnish poison for the arrow-tip
That messages a death from savage bow.
I clearly see upon his sensuous lip
A fitting vent for the debouching flow
Of sewage from a tongue as foul as hell
That would for gold its doubtful silence sell.

BETRAYAL.

I saw her once,—I would I could forget,—
A blushing rose gave perfume to her hair;
I did not love her then—nor since—and yet
I may be pardoned if I thought her fair.

Her large and trusting eyes to me expressed
A world of innocence and simple truth.
Becoming one whom nature had caressed
And left resplendent in her virgin youth.

I saw her once again,—regretful change;—
Her features bore the traces deep of care;
Her heart to guilt and guile no longer strange,
For she had nursed a venomed serpent there.

TWO BOOKS.

The other day I read,—unwelcome thought,—
A novel recommended by a name;
Perhaps I failed to grasp it as I ought,
And should have kept in mind the author's fame;
But I preferred to judge the work in hand
By its effect upon my mind and heart,
And, if its worth I failed to understand,
'Tis due to my deficiency in art.

A veritist, or realist, I think
Was what they called the author of the book;
Which suffered here and there a missing link,
But worth, perhaps, the labor that it took;
But somehow I completed it distressed,
And morbid, harassed, weary and misused;

And on the whole, if truth must be confessed,
I felt my sensibilities abused.

I read another book,—perhaps unreal,—
Impressionist—the author may have been;
It so portrayed and pictured the ideal,
That I forgot that other world of sin;
So thoroughly this dreamer touched my heart,
I took forthwith a brighter view of life,
And, laying down the book, with simple art
I rose and kissed my children and my wife.

LANDING OF COLUMBUS.

The night wind rested, and the listless sail
Hung limp and motionless above the deck;
The vessels all laid to, in easy hail,
And eager eyes were glued upon the speck
That hovered o'er the placid moonlit deep
Presaging land, precluding aught of sleep.

All mutiny was stilled in anxious hearts
That long had suffered agony untold,
And criminal intent, excused by arts
Of specious plea as innocent as bold,
Lay dormant and forgotten in the sight
That greeted watching eyes that charming night.

At two o'clock the rose-tint of the dawn
Revealed at last the gleam of promised land,
And all their dread anxiety was gone;
The tender wept, the bravest were unmanned,
For, though the land should prove a trackless waste,
It was at least the phantom they had chased.

The glowing morn, with its resplendent light,
  Enlit what seemed a most enchanted spot,
And every heart with joy and hope was bright,
  And months of long-drawn agony forgot;
The anchor cast, the boats were manned and armed
  To follow him they lately would have harmed.

Columbus bent his rapture-beaming eyes
  Toward the near and dear, approaching shore,
Attired in scarlet to affect the guise
  Of courtliness becoming one who wore
The dignities conferred him for renown,
  In bearing thus the standard of the crown.

The wondering inhabitants with awe
  Bethought the ships were birds with mighty wings.
And, in their fancy, pictured beak and claw
  And plumage on the awe-inspiring things;
All gathered on the shore to feast their eyes
  Upon the white-winged messengers of skies.

The atmosphere upbore a perfume rare
  From flowers that bloomed perennial and free,
And drowsy was the soft and balmy air,
  And calm and still the deep, transparent sea;
It seemed indeed some sweet enchanted isle,
  Where fairies might in joy abide the while.

The mild and sunlit air impassive slept,
  Wooed by the incense from a thousand flowers.
And smilingly the glinting brooklets crept,
  Through fairy glens and happy woodland bowers
Beneath whose sylvan shades there gurgled springs,
  And all the air was gay with whirring wings.

The plumaged birds in all prismatic hues,
From branch and twig were flitting blithe and gay;
And turtle doves, with plaintive wooing coos,
Gave just a touch of pathos to the day
Made musical and happy by the notes
Awakened from a thousand tiny throats.

They reach the shore at last, and prostrate kneel,
Returning thanks for triumphs grandly won,
All clad in their habiliments of steel
That glinted in the splendor of the sun,
The proud commander gorgeously arrayed
With all the pomp of majesty displayed.

With overwhelming joy, the pent up tears
Outpoured in thankful flood upon the sand;
As recompense for all their toils and fears
They trod at last the welcome promised land,
And, as the dog that licks the hand that fed,
All crouched submissive to the man who led.

When all their dread intentions had been told,
Columbus, with a shepherd's gentle soul,
Received the errant sheep into the fold,
Forgave with magnanimity the whole,
Forgetting vengeance in exultant bliss,
With artless love he gave his hand to kiss.

Had he not triumphed over mental night
And scaled the ocean fortress wide and high?
Then who would envy the exultant light
That gleamed in satisfaction in his eye?
He had accomplished, while beset with fears,
The greatest peace achievement of the years!

FISHING.

I love to spend my leisure hours
  Where nature calls and love invites;
On mossy banks, amid the flowers,
  And fish without a thought of bites.

What care we if the ogling fish
  Peer upward through the lucid deeps?
Why should we blush and idly wish
  Seclusion from their cautious peeps?

I care not what the world may say,
  I love the fisher's patient art,
And will forever bless the day
  I fished and caught my true-love's heart.

COUNCIL OAK.

Thou gnarled and knotted freak* of sluggish growth,
  Deep roooted in historic virgin sod,
Where happy lovers plight their sacred troth
  And savage feet in vanished years have trod,—
What tragic scenes hast thy deep shade concealed?
  What hast thou seen that time has not revealed?

Thy stunted arms in benediction spread,
  Thrill all inquiring souls with somber awe;
Thy wind-swept leaves breathe tidings of the dead
  Who bivouacked here before the reign of law
And passed away, nor left to us a name
  To wreath in garlands or enshroud in shame.

*Oak in Riverside Park, Sioux City, Ia.

Canst thou not tell to me what pioneers
In bygone days explored this promised land,
And here encamped, where through primeval years
No feet had trod save those of savage band,
And feasted here beneath thy spreading arms
And slept unconscious of impending harms?

Perhaps the chief† who sleeps on yonder hill
Communed with braves once gathered where I stand,
And plotted here to forage, scalp and kill,
And rescue from the foe their native land;
Perhaps they had a right to it,—but no!
There are but few who view the matter so.

Proud patriarch of all that greets the view!
Within thy choice dominions are embraced
The picturesque environs of the Sioux—
A realm that lavish nature grandly graced
With landscapes richer than the painter's art
To cold and listless canvas can impart.

Here, where the painted braves were wont to greet
Their stolid chieftains in the long ago,
Three kindred states in friendly greeting meet;
And, where the sweeping streams together flow,
A thriving city spreads, and here has made
Her chief resort beneath thy cooling shade.

And here, where once the dusky council met
To ponder on and plan its scheme of war,
And where determined wooers even yet
Secure the maids they are campaigning for,
I stand and dream and listen to the tale
That's whispered by this monarch of the vale!

†War Eagle.

TO MY CIGAR.

O sweet, seductive, captivating roll!
Within thee lurks the viper's deadly sting,
Whose poison, subtly stealing, soothes the soul,
Caressing fondly, like a sentient thing.

I welcome thee e'en as I would a friend,
The dear companion of my troubled hours;
And all my harsher moods to thee unbend
Subservient to thy hypnotic powers.

I picture forms within thy fleecy cloud
And hold communion with the things of air;
And mental pain, beneath thy drowsy shroud,
Forgotten is, while I am dreaming there.

And even now, while bent upon thy task
Of consolation, thy dread potion works;
O tell me why so oft behind the mask
Of seeming friendship base deception lurks?

Of thy seductions,—I can well believe
They are the most insidious of all;
If such an artful serpent tempted Eve
I can no longer wonder at the Fall.

THE BLIZZARD.

Raging and whirling, a maddening throng
Of keen, cutting snowflakes that fearfully hiss;
In blind, seething fury there scurries along,
The death-dealing storm, in whose icy cold kiss

There lurks all the potency deadly to feeling
While artfully bent on its task of congealing.

Away on the prairie, alone in the storm,
Where no habitation can succor and aid,
In thought sore bewildered there struggles a form
As noble, yet helpless as ever was made;
While over him subtly a drowsiness stealing,
At last overwhelms and he falls in his reeling.

Within a rude hovel, a stranger to care,
There huddles in squalor a mother and child,
Whose shivering cries are all lost on the air
And mocked by the laugh of the elements wild;
While over them slowly a warmness is creeping
That leaves them at last in a love-embrace
sleeping.

Wierdly along, like a requiem wild,
The northwind is screaming and eddying on;
But, calm as a zephyr, comes peacefully mild,
A hush, and behold!—all the fury is gone;
But sadly the tender are bending and weeping
Above the white faces so peacefully sleeping.

GENIUS.

As one who stands upon the sunlit peak
Amid the deep infinity of space,
Too thrilled to move, too charmed and awed to speak,
I contemplate the genius of the race,
And worship at its solitary shrine
In deep solemnity, as near divine.

SOLITUDE.

The torrid sun directs depressing shafts
  Upon a weary stretch of western plain,
While not a breath of summer wind upwafts
  To cool my parching face and fevered brain.

The heat, uprising in an endless sea
  Of waving chaos, forms a nodding waste;
While distant blades of grass across the lea
  Seem virgin forests solitary, chaste.

A heat mirage obscures horizon's verge
  And stilliness, oppressive, awes the soul;
The fetid earth and heaven's azure merge
  While wavy indistinctness shrouds the whole.

No sound of moving life breaks on the ear;
  The rattlesnake lies sluggish in the sun;
The prairie grass is prematurely sere,
  And animation stands appalled, undone.

My aching heart beats loudly as I stand,
  As quiet as a statue carved of stone,—
In spirit sore distressed and all unmanned,—
  I feel it is not good to be alone.

THE OLD HOMESTEAD.

A love to recall the old homestead,
  I would not, nor could I forget
The scenes that were dear to my childhood,
  The scenes that are dear to me yet.

How hopeful the sowing at springtime!
How fruitful the harvest in fall!
How joyous the proud independence
That seems to me dearer than all!

How sweet on returning at even,
From fields that I so loved to roam,
To see in the old farmhouse doorway
My mother to welcome me home.

How oft in the hush of the twilight,
When cows homeward trudged through the dell,
I've listened with pleasure at hearing
The soft, tinkling sound of the bell.

'Twas sweet, as I gladly remember,
When weary, to pillow my head,
And, wooing the goddess of slumber,
Repose in my soft feather bed.

'Twas sweet to awake in the morning
To bird-warbled notes from the trees,
And breathe through the half-open window
The vigor of health from the breeze.

And somehow it seems to me truly,
Those days of my youth were the best;
When I was content with the homestead,
And life had its relish and rest.

THE OLD MILL STREAM.

I see in retrospection, though the picture brings a sigh,
The dam which turned the water-wheel in good old days gone by,

The smiling miller met me on the platform by the door,
Enlivened at the prospect of his tithe of grain, or more.

And when I took my grist to mill I spent the livelong day,
And ate my dinner while the team at noontide munched the hay;
Above the dam the boys would swim; below the men would fish,—
The miller meantime taking all the toll his heart could wish.

Upon the banks of that old stream I've treed the wary coon,
While hunting through the forest with no lantern but the moon;
And many a night I've gladly heard the hounds' triumphant bay,
A sweeter music to me then than warbled roundelay.

Upon that stream I used to boat, my sweetheart by my side;
Her eyes were glowing with delight, her cheeks were crimson-dyed;
Those days are past, the dam is gone, the stream a boy can wade,
No fishes gambol in its depths, no lovers woo its shade.

The mill itself has vanished through the years of slow decay,
And e'en the piles on which it stood were long since washed away;
The miller ceased his grinding when he rendered up his soul,
In hopes of higher recompense than any earthly toll.

Of that old stream and mill-dam naught but memory survives,
For all the old familiar scenes have vanished from our lives;
But so it is through all the years, we know not why nor how,
The happy Then is changing to the stern and sober Now.

THE ONE I LOVE.

She is always sweetly smiling
And the passing hours beguiling
With some idle reminiscence or a snatch of some old song;

And her sun is always shining
And her clouds have silver lining,
She is strange to all repining and she cannot know a wrong.

We are often seen together
Walking down the hedge and heather,
Both as happy as two creatures ever were since time began;
While the doves are gently cooing
And the cows are faintly mooing
We enjoy the task of wooing as true lovers only can.

She is untaught to dissemble
And her honest eyes resemble
All the brilliancy and beauty and the purity of stars;
And her modest lips inviting
Welcome every kiss alighting,
From the first to last, unslighting, with a relish nothing mars.

She is trustful and confiding
With an innocence abiding,
And she feels that I am worthy of her confidence and love;
And she gives them free as water,
And I know that I have taught her
That I love my little daughter as a father ought to love.

A BALLAD OF PIE.

I'm a scientific baker, though I'm not a money maker,
And I couldn't and I wouldn't tell a lie—naughty lie;
But the fact is sure as shootin' that for pastry hifalutin'
I will stake my future fortune on my pie—charming pie!

I had just returned from college with a smattering of knowledge
And a very marked deficiency in health—needful health;
So I went to South Dakota, like a modern Don Quixote,
To chase the fairy phantom known as wealth—fickle wealth?

There are many potent forces in that land of quick divorces
That will neutralize the culture of the Hub—mighty Hub!
And my feverish ambition found its outlet in the mission
Of appeasing my abnormal calls for grub—vulgar grub!

In this status so annoying I was guilty of employing
As the caterer in chief to feed a horde—hungry horde
Of the leanest, lankest "skinners" and the most consummate sinners
That ever gathered round a festal board—western board.

Now a "skinner" in that region is a member of the legion
Who are deft and potent wielders of the lash—stinging lash!
And are experts in berating stubborn mules engaged in freighting,
And in speedy dissipation of their cash—filthy cash!

Their facility as eaters gives them prestige as world beaters,
And of baking powder biscuits they are fond—very fond!
So it seemed to be my duty to these skinners strange to beauty
To conjure up these dainties with my wand—magic wand!

So, when on the reservation of the mighty Indian nation
Who are known in feats of villainy as Sioux—ugly Sioux!
Far from human habitation, in a nervous agitation,
I would meet my obligation best I knew—barely knew.

As a fact that needs explaining, I confess my only training
Was a momentary call upon a cook—manly cook,
Who had but explained the making of the biscuits he was baking,
As I had no time at hand to seek a book—cooking book.

With an amateurish longing and without a thought of wronging
Or of causing by my verdancy a sigh—human sigh,
I bethought me I would vary the monotony and marry
A little of my genius to a pie—luscious pie!

So I rummaged through the larder with a deal of worthy ardor
For the chemicals and compounds I should need—badly need;
And with bread-pan for a mortar and my fingers for a sorter,
I had soon made preparations for the deed—fatal deed!

With a heart with joy rebounding I was busily compounding
All the needful for my masterpiece in pie—crispy pie!
While a dozen hungry "skinners" were impatient for their dinners
Though there wasn't one of them prepared to die—quickly die,

First, the elements potential, flour and water, were essential,
Then a little salt and quite a deal of lard—greasy lard!
And to make the pie crust airy it was thought quite necessary
To mix with baking powder, kneading hard—dreadful hard!

When this massage was completed, with the roller pin I treated
This great mixture that should usher in an age—grander age!
And I rolled it thin as wafers and then cut artistic capers
As a frontispiece upon the title page—handsome page!

It was filled with canned tomatoes, though if I had used potatoes
I am certain they'd have answered me as well—full as well;
Then I shoved it in the oven with the vigor of a sloven
And awaited in impatience for its smell—wholesome smell!

With imagination heated, when I thought the work completed,
I then opened with avidity the door—oven door;
Then I fell back! So amazing was its faculty of raising
That the space prevented it from raising more—any more.

It was puffy and plethoric, both Corinthian and Doric.
With its spires and rugged columns running high–mountain high,
And the raw tomato filling that I thought would be so "killing"
All was lost within the caverns of that pie—portly pie!

I admit I had expected that my genius had erected
A great monument eternal to my name—honored name!
But I made no calculation that an Indian reservation
Should contain so swell a tribute to my fame--transient fame!

As a pie-ous ultimatum it remains without erratum—
My first and last and only work in pie—heaving pie!
But the fact that I should bake it should so self important make it,
Still seems to me a gauzy reason why—reason why,

As a freak of pastry cooking, there can be no overlooking
That its only worthy rival was the one—fabled one,
Where the blackbirds four and twenty—and that number is a plenty—
Flew singing from its portals when was done--fully done.

When I called the hungry dozen-and no need to coax and cozen–
They assembled round the grub and took a seat—grassy seat;
And they fell at once to filling—like a pack of coyotes willing
To undertake most anything to eat—fit to eat.

When the first course was completed and their startled eyes were greeted
With the pie prepared by their beloved chef—willing chef,
Each arose in turn suspicious, and with policy judicious,
To all of my entreaties they were deaf—very deaf!

They were somewhat disconcerted, and to tell the truth, diverted,
I thought I should surprise them--and I did—yes I did!
But respecting my intention, they all promised not to mention
A matter that were better always hid—closely hid.

There is somewhere on the prairies, where the rattle-snake still
tarries,
And the sagebrush and the cactus flourish dry—very dry,
A production that's attested to remain yet unmolested—
A non-corrosive prodigy of pie – mammoth pie!

In this age of advertising, what developments surprising
Yet await the enterprise that should rely—would rely—
On the argument that's hoarded and is even yet afforded
By my baking powder miracle in pie—virgin pie!

THE MISSOURI.

The proud Missouri sweeps amain,
In sandy trail across the plain;
And plenty follows in her train.

She sings a song in rythmic flow,
Of mountains and eternal snow,
And mines of boundless wealth below;
Of rustic scenes in glen and glade,
Where shepherds have their flocks conveyed
And rugged habitations made;
Of gushing springs on either hand,
Of crystal caves and canons grand,
And cataracts by rainbows spanned;
Of spots where once were wigwam fires,
But now a maze of city spires,
Where all is found that man requires.

Upon her bosom throbbing free,
She bears the flowers of the lea,
To greet with perfume rare the sea.

THE ALABAMA HOG.

Missouri has the "yaller dog,"
That most repulsive brute,
But Alabama has the hog
That has the longest snoot;
His bristles all are firmly set
And sharper than a brad,
He always has his back up, yet
He isn't always mad.

A menace to the common weal,
He's never sick a day,
Was never known to miss a meal
And never known to pay;
A most consumptive looking brute,
He has the leanest meat,
And as he has the longest snoot
He has the most to eat.

He's often pestered by the dog,
But he don't care a d——
He's independent as a hog
And happy as a clam;
If devils ever entered swine
There are a score at least
Of naughty demons who combine
In this infernal beast.

Although they need a better breed,
Way down in Alabam;
They have at least the very beast
For making "Deviled Ham."

MY LOST.

Over a little pair of shoes
I bend and weep;
I would not these mementos lose
For gold sea-deep;
They're all that's left to me of her
Gone these long years,
At thought of whom my eyes will blur
With bitter tears.

Only a pair of shoes well-worn
With childish tread,—
The cherished relics that have borne
My sacred dead;
They are to me of priceless worth,
Revered for love
Of that sweet visitant to earth
Returned above.

THE CENTENARY OF BURNS.

The world is filled with countless songs
To which undying fame belongs,
Of smiles and tears and rights and wrongs,
Each vending its own hobby;
But of all bards of high degree,
Whose songs are rich in melody,
None sings so charmingly to me
As my ain bonnie Robbie.

He pities e'en the hapless mouse
By chance evicted from its house,
And moralizes on a louse
  Upon a bonnet nobby.
He's dear to Scotia and to me,
And for a' that will ever be;
"O wad some power the giftie gie"
  Another such as Robbie.

He aired the impulse of his heart,
Employing but the peasant's art,
Acquired about the village mart
  Or field or farmyard lobby;
But so sublime his sweet address
To Mary, full of tenderness,
It will his name forever bless,
  The honored name of Robbie.

TO LOWELL.

Come Lowell, come and sing to me!
  Thy tuneful lyre
I fain would think is strung for me,
  For none admire
More ardently thy genius' fire;
Come Lowell, come and sing to me!

Had I, dear Lowell, but thy art
  And fancy free,
I would unbosom all my heart
  And hold with thee
Communion as thou dost with me,
Had I, dear Lowell, but thy art.

THE PRAIRIE FLOWER.

Where the prickly cactus rages,
And the frowning clouds for ages
Have seldom shed a sympathizing tear,
An uncultivated flower
Blooms within a withered bower
In an arid waste of prairie brown and sere.

Unpretentious, unassuming,
It continues lonely blooming
And lavishing its fragrance on the air;
And, though no eye looks upon it,
It deserves a poet's sonnet
As the one oasis in the desert there.

'Tis addicted much to giving
And the wayward bees are living
As its ever welcome pensioners,—and yet
Its benevolence is paying
For the insects are defraying,
In luxuriance of color, all their debt.

EVENING.

When softly the waning light
Fades out of the evening skies,
Then open the eyes of night,—
The bright, little twinkling eyes;
And eyes that are bright by day
Grow weary and faint and close,
And, curtained in sleep away,
On cushions of down repose.

With eyes that can never weep,
Sewed into their muslin heads.
Are two rag dollies asleep
In little cigar-box beds;
And there by the wall in twos,
Asleep by the wall in rows,
Are four little faithful shoes
Worn out at the heels and toes.

And two little baby tots
Have offered a baby's prayer
And gone to their baby cots
Where all is forgot, and where
Embarked in a downy boat,
As snug as peas in a pod,
Away from the world they float
To visit the land of Nod.

THE WIFE.

Try to treat your wife today
In the fond and gentle way
That you wooed her;
She is now as sweet as when
In the courting season then
You construed her.

Though she pins her faith to you
Never doubting you are true
You avoid her;
And her heart has heavy grown,
But it's your neglect alone
Has annoyed her.

Love is all a woman's life,
And you owe it to your wife
For it won her;
And a little thoughtful care
And caressing will repair
Mischief done her.

Try again the loving kiss
That was never found amiss—
It will mend her;
And her face will seem more fair
With the love-light gleaming there
Warm and tender.

COME, BABY, COME.

Come baby, come to your papa now,
Come little darling to me;
Never another as sweet I vow,
Never another like thee.

Thou art the blossom of perfect love,
Sprung from a union divine;
Never an angel in Heaven above
Had birthright purer than thine.

Souls intertwined in a sacred tie,
Hearts in their purity wed,—
Bound by a love that can never die;—
These to thy little life led.

Nothing is purer, my babe, than thee;
Come thou and stand at my side!

Lift up your innocent eyes to me,
Hold up your head in its pride!

Were every baby as sweet as mine,
All from deception as free;
Were every life, love, as pure as thine,—
O what a world this would be!

I AM MARRIED.

I cannot sing of lovely maids,
Of eyes and cheeks and auburn curls;
Though heart should prompt the tongue evades
For I am married.

My brain has no inspiring whirls,
No virgin fount from which to draw;
However much I love the girls,
For I am married.

Of all the girls I ever saw,
'Twere strange indeed did none impress;
Perhaps they did—but then, O pshaw!
I now am married.

The ogling glance, the sweet address,
I dare not, will not greet in turn;
'Twere sacrilegious—nothing less,
For I am married.

So girls, howe'er your ardor burn
Your wasted sweets I can't return
As you may readily discern,
For I am married.

THE WIFE'S LAMENT.

Why don't you tell me often that you love me,
My husband dear, as once you used to do?
I wonder too, you do not oft caress me,
And show me that I yet am dear to you.

I know you love me though no outward token,
And that your heart I yet entire possess;
But yet I long to hear the old words spoken,
And feel again that former love caress.

THE WHEEL.

I value above the nation's wealth
The gift of the silent wheel,
The foe of ills and the friend of health,
All hail to the steed of steel!

The days of the giants all are sped
And vanished the life of length,
And the ancient Samsons all are dead
And gone are their feats of strength.

But who can tell what the future holds
In fee for the coming race,
When the mind of man each day unfolds
Some triumph o'er time and space?

It may be long ere we ride the air
And conquer the wayward breeze,
But we have the wheel and we little care
For it takes us where we please.

We may attain our estate once more
And our span of life extend,
And the giant strength of the days of yore
Again on the race descend.

Here's to the wheel of whatever name
That most to the world appeals,
And here's to the genius rare who came
And mounted the world on wheels.

WOMAN, QUEENLY WOMAN!

Hypatia taught the Hellenese
And led the flower of youth
From ways of darkness by degrees
To everlasting truth;
And so from beauty's chastened lips
The errant world was taught,
That sex can never quite eclipse
The brilliancy of thought.

Well may her Greece in its old age,
Reflecting on the past,
Point proudly to the lustrous page,—
The page so near the last,—
This heroine and martyr graced
While freedom gave her sway,
With learning most sublime and chaste
That has survived her day.

Joan of Arc, that saintly maid,
Who nerved the falt'ring host;

Who at the shrine of country laid
What woman loves the most,
And like a goddess she arose,
And, seizing shield and lance,
She flaunted in the face of foes
Defiance all for France.

The field of Orleans gently breathes
To her exalted name,
A victor's praise that puts the wreaths
Of Cæsars all to shame;
Her fame throughout her native land
For aye will live to teach
That fortitude and valor grand
Are both in woman's reach.

Then, Mrs. Stowe's inspiring touch
Has swayed us as she willed;
No other ever has so much
Our deep emotions thrilled;
She proved that brain was never sexed,
And all her life she sought
To broaden and enlarge the vexed
Democracy of thought.

No marble shaft the world can raise
Could glorify her name,
Nor could an epitaph of praise
Contribute to her fame;
No crumbling pile of senseless stone
Should desecrate her grave,
Her monument should be alone
The liberated slave.

Then Mrs. Stanton, grand and brave,

In thought the peer of men,
Who from the cradle to the grave
Has broadened woman's ken;
She faced, at best, a cruel world
In struggling year by year,
But never was her flag unfurled
Except in woman's sphere.

Louisa Alcott won a place
Supreme within the heart,
Because her labors for the race
Have now become a part
Of all we are or hope to be;
For none, in simple truth,
Has ever done as much as she
Has done for child and youth.

As long as we can voice a note,
The fame will never dim,
Of Julia Howe, who grandly wrote
The thrilling Battle Hymn,
That will forever keep us brave
And faithful to the end,
While there remains a flag to save
Or country to defend.

Despite her views of human rights
The world will long be taught
By Eliot, who reached the heights
And depths of human thought;
A woman gentle and benign,
And yet so brave she hurled
Defiance through a love divine
That scorned a formal world.

WIFE VISITING.

Within the silent chamber here
My heart's desire
Once honored with her presence dear,
I woo the fire;
I watch it's gleam and while I dream
So pensively,
It glints and glares and ghostly flares
Offensively.
I gape and nap and, waking, sigh
To find my love is nowhere nigh;
And, petulant almost to rage,
I turn and look
For some bright book
That will my loneliness assuage.
I thumb and cull the dumb and dull
And well-worn tomes,
But find there's nothing quite to mind
So much my fancy roams.
While musing o'er confusing lore
Once so lusty, now so fusty,
Mouldy, musty, old and dusty,
Cranky, crusty, soiled and rusty,—
Never seeming so before;
I stop and wonder why in thunder
Life is such a bore.

AT SIGHT.

I said: "There is my wife!"
But then, to save my life

I know not why I said it;
Nor why I should declare
My passion then and there
And take so much on credit.

Though spoken in my mind
My thought the maid divined,
Nor did she seem unwilling;
And, though our lips were mute,
Love's newly wakened lute
With melody was thrilling.

All this was long ago
And I would have you know
I stopped my useless suing;
But, like a lover true,
Since I began to woo,
I never have stopped wooing.

WASHINGTON.

The Revolution's mighty son,
The father of the nation;
Whose noble deeds of duty done
Are known to all creation.

We praise him as an honest youth
And brave, there's no denying;
'Tis said he always told the truth
When tempted much to lying.

He faced his father like a man
When once he thought he'd catch it;
There's no reply more manly than
"I did it with my hatchet."

A man of stern but noble mind,
Of stately, manly beauty;
Though dignified, he too was kind,
And never shirked a duty.

To victory he paved the way,—
The Delaware—he crossed it,
And thus he grandly won the day
Where others might have lost it.

And when he died, in grief repined
A nation without tether,
For it had lost a man designed
To hold all hearts together.

LORA.

I look into her raven eyes
Wherein a wealth of beauty lies,
When lit with wonder or surprise
That questions me;
And then, my dear, I somehow feel
That life for me is full of weal
As long as she remains to seal
My soul to thee.

Her innocence, almost sublime,
Reminds me of that happy time
My face resembled in its prime
Her features now;
I fondly wish that she remain
As innocent and strange to pain
Until at last grim death shall reign
Upon my brow.

NEWSTEAD ABBEY.

There stands a crumbling, haunted pile
  That one time housed a race accurst
By venomed slander, doubly vile,
  Because it fabricated crime
As foul as lies in filth immersed
  Could paint the devil in his prime.

Within those grim, baronial walls
  Lord Byron was one time immured,
And there he listened to the calls
  Ambition made, and, wrong or right,
He fled, ere he had long endured
  His soul's imprisonment and night.

He sought the blue Italian skies
  To riot in illicit bliss
And revel in, and eulogise
  The lapse of native virtue, where
E'en chastity evades a kiss
  Because of danger lurking there.

When weary of debauch at length,
  His discontented mind and heart,
His wealth and influence and strength
  Were all enlisted the cause
Of struggling Greece, the nurse of art,
  To win or lose her sweet applause.

But ere the die of war was cast
  The fever and delirium came,
And restlessness found rest at last

While muttering in tenderness
Each dear and yet dishonored name
Of those he loved who loved him less.

His genius grandly made amends
For torture from his caustic pen,
And won the title from his friends
Who have forgiven faults of birth,
Of poet-peer of England then,
Now poet-peer of all the earth.

MAN EATS MEAT.

'Tis said the men who first ate meat
Like jackals ate it raw,
But now they cook it ere they eat,
They do no longer gnaw.

It was a long, long time ago
When man ate like a beast;
It must have been, for all we know,
Five thousand years at least.

The Hebrews knew and were quite glad
That cooked meat would not spoil,
And poor old Job quite often had
A big, fat, juicy boil.

Then Raleigh, it is not denied,
Gay courtier and fop,
Received a moment ere he died
His very last cold chop.

Poor Bruno had the warmest dish
His enemies could make,
It was, though much against his wish,
A red hot, sizzling stake.

And then again, the Scriptures say,
While Christ was at his post,
The Scribes and Pharisees each day
Were sure to get a roast.

LOVE.

All ears to hear, all eyes to see,
  A lion roused—at peace a dove;
A selfish virtue it may be--
  The only one—and it is love.

But ne'er since Cupid first began
  The havoc of his magic art,
Did sweeter cherub ever fan
  Diviner flame within the heart.

LINCOLN.

I would I could, in some exalted strain,
  Portray the worth and grandeur of a soul
As great as ever mortals can attain,
  I then might find my labor, on the whole
A pleasing task, because the theme inspires
With all that man reveres and man admires.

Of what, at best, is worthiness composed?
Must heroes always bear the stain of blood?
To what, at most, is kindly fame disposed?
The archives of the world contain a flood
Of records filled with earth's most famous names,
Some measured by results and some by aims.

A title can convey no thought of worth;
There's no distinction but deserved success,
For, after all, there is not much in birth
And blood means little and it may mean less,
For character is certain to appear
Though rags or purple be the garb and gear.

And what is wealth, but potency abused
Unless it bring a righteous boon to men?
And what position, if it be not used
For some unselfish purpose now and then?
Where Mercy, even tempered, guides the hand,
There Justice finds a dwelling in the land.

Fame does not haunt mausoleums and tombs
Where all is dumb and dull and dry and drear;
Nor yet the mighty pyramid that looms
Above the dead, that living shed no tear
For all the griefs and woes of toiling slaves
Who built a landmark o'er dishonored graves.

Great Lincoln grandly won his meed of fame
Through purity of motive and results;
Through tenderness, and that diviner flame
Of fervor that religiously consults
The conscience in performance of an act
Which justice wanted not, nor mercy lacked.

Of humble birth, with no auspicious star
To augur aught of honor or success,
Surmounting ev'ry obstacle and bar,
He mounted to the heights of worthiness
And left upon its pinnacle a name
Engraven in the pedestal of fame.

As broad and wholesome as his native lea,
As rugged as the forest he adored;
His brain untrammeled and his pulses free
As throbbed within the eagle as it soared,
The emblem of his country, o'er the plain,
Or ruled the air in solitary reign;

A humble man, with loyal soul and true,
Great Lincoln had the energy and power,
The full capacity, the greatness due
To meet the stern requirements of the hour;
Ignoring self, he sought the public weal,
With honest aim and most uncommon zeal.

TRINITY.

You, my love, and baby,
Are all of life to me;
You and I and baby,—
A mimic world of three;
We measure with our smiles and tears
The joys and griefs of men,
And with them suffer through the years,
Misfortunes now and then.

You, my love, and baby,
Are more than dear to me;

You and I and baby,—
A loving trinity;
We form a magic rule of three
Which cannot come amiss
To reach the unknown quantity
That bears the name of bliss.

You, my love, and baby,
My happiness assure;
You and I and baby,—
A world in miniature;
No matter how false others be
So long as we are true,
There'll be at least a world of three
Where love is ever new.

CHANGE.

A drop of water, by the hot sun kissed,
Uprises from the sea in form unseen;
Wind-swept ashore as darkly clouding mist
It cools to rain und robes the earth in green.

It seeks a spring and gushing from its fount,
It trails a rivulet across the lea;
And, swelling like a torrent from the mount,
At last debouches on the waiting sea.

From sea to spring and spring to sea again!
Now in the earth, now hovering in air,
Now falling as the dew; anon as rain,
And then again as crystal beauties rare.

All this is change, and nature must submit;
And though it nothing loses, nothing gains;
Though forms may change, assuming those more fit,
The substance, indestructible, remains.

MATRIMONY.

Two sparkling streamlets, blithe and gay,
Course through the flowered lea,
And each, unfettered, seeks it way
To greet the waiting sea.

There seems to be a subtle power
That makes the like converge,
For, day by day, and hour by hour,
These streams together merge.

And soon their ways are so inwrought
That both together run,—
"Two souls with but a single thought,
Two hearts that beat as one."

LOVE'S TALE.

You can read it in the eye, beaming love!
And it never tells a lie, truthful love!
It is such a happy feeling
That one cannot help revealing
For it laughs at all concealing, happy love!

When it trembles on the lip, frightened love!
'Tis the eye that gives the tip, watchful love!
And you know there's no mistaking

That a heart is ripe for breaking
Should its idol try forsaking such a love.

'Tis a Shylock in disguise, robbing love!
In demanding bonded ties, cruel love!
But although it is exacting,
It will not admit contracting,
For it's value lies in acting out your love.

ALEXANDER AND DIOGENES.

(ATTENDANT)

Thou art Diogenes. I come to you
With orders from my master, who
Is none but Alexander, called the Great;
Receive him as befits his state.

(ALEXANDER)

Philosopher, who art much famed for lore,
I would that we had met before;
But now, that I am here, I came, 'tis true,
To see what I could do for you.

(DIOGENES)

Proud dog of war, thou fabled son of Mars,
I would that I could heal the scars
That you have caused by bloody shield and lance;
Begone and give the sun a chance!

(ALEXANDER ASIDE)

Ambition I have glutted all in vain;
For here's a man more fit to reign;
Were I not Alexander, I would please
To be but this Diogenes.

THE HAPPY MAN.

His nose is flat, his lips are thick,
His face is black as coal;
His form is lithe, his movement quick,
And merry is his soul.

He spends the day in blacking shoes,
Behind a barber's chair,
And tells his customers the news
As free as Heaven's air.

At night, from hidden nook unknown,
He comes in evening dress;
Upon his shirt-front gleams a stone
Sublime in ruggedness.

He dances at a colored ball
In ecstacy supreme,
And feels the many pleasures all
Of which we only dream.

REFLECTION.

I somehow feel so sad today
While all alone,
That I, but late a child at play,
So old have grown.

I can recall when days seemed years,—
Now years seem days,
And, what would once occasion tears,
Provokes amaze.

Soon I will be a gray, old man
With feeling tread,

And childish thoughts will once again
Reign in my head.

Thus to the grave I'll totter on,
Frail, bent and thin;
And men forget when I am gone
That I have been.

As years progress, one thought consoles,—
That while I live,
The friendship of congenial souls
Will comfort give.

TO MY WIFE.

My loved and my dear, loving wife,
My soul is enraptured with thee;
My love, thou art breath, blood and life;
And all that is dearest to me.

As fuel and light to the fire,
As water and shore to the sea;
Or e'en as content to desire,
So thou art, my darling, to me.

My memory cherishes dear,—
I could not, nor would I forget,—
The moment, the day and the year
Some angel disposed and we met.

Our lives have so blended since then
That mine became thine and thine mine
And each became wealthier when
Two children became mine and thine.

WHEN LOVE GROWS COLD.

If love should fail what is there left of life?
Ah what indeed! when tender hearts congeal,
And brother, sister, parent, child and wife
No love can feel?

What is the home when tenderness has fled?
Ah what indeed! a sterile, cheerless spot,—
A tomb where every sentiment is dead,
If love is not?

What would become of all our earthly bliss?
Ah what indeed! if ties no longer bind,
And fond caresses and the fervent kiss
No rapture find?

If love should fail what means the gentle touch?
Ah what indeed! what means to young or old?
What signifies the cradle or the crutch
When love is cold?

What sweet incentive to heroic act?
And what indeed! and what ambition's fires,
If, in the struggle for the goal attacked
No love inspires?

GREATNESS.

Once Johnson reached the place that Lincoln won,—
A strange anomaly, as now appears;
One was forgotten when his work was done,—
The other has grown grander with the years.

MUSIC.

There is music in the air,
There is music everywhere,
There is music in the meadow where the summer sun shines;
There is music in the breeze,
There is music in the trees,
And there's music in the rustle of the vines.

BEAUTY.

There is beauty in the sun,
When the day has begun,
There is beauty in its setting at the eve behind the hill;
There is beauty in the night
When the stars shine bright,
And there's beauty in the moonlight calm and still.

O GIVE ME THE MAIDEN.

O give me the maiden of modest demeanor
As fair as the stars that bedazzle on high;
When ripe for the harvest let me be the gleaner
And garner the treasure that gleams in her eye.

The maiden of nature, unconsciously blushing,
And sparkling with love in its purity sweet,
That fresh from her heart like a fountain is gushing
And pouring it's torrent divine at my feet.

The maid who is kindly and queenly and gracious,
As calm and serene as the blue azure dome;

The one whose best graces are unostentatious,
The one who can help make a heaven of home.

But give me no wife as a mere beast of burden,
And spare me the flower too tender for earth;
But give me the one who can earn her life's guerdon
By doing her duty and proving her worth.

And give me the wife whom kind nature has dowered,—
Enriched with affection and tenderness rare,
And one whose caresses, like rich blessings showered,
Can woo me to gladness when sobered by care.

THE NYMPH.

As I was once roaming through forest and glen,
Convinced I was wholly alone;
A voice in that solitude startled me when
I found that it was not my own.

Half frightened, I ventured to ask, "Who is here?"
And faintly the far distant shout
Of a coy little Nymph with her answering, "Here!"
Could leave me no longer in doubt.

Regaining my courage I said, "May I come?"
But shyly her echoing taunt
Implied in its tone, as she answered me, "Come!"
"I know I'm secure in my haunt."

"O why do you shun me?" I ventured again;
"You shun me!" she dauntless replied.
And then, half provoked, to her covey I ran,
Determined I'd not be defied.

I searched all the hills and the forest in vain,
And peered in the caves 'mong the rocks;
But that she is somewhere in hiding is plain,
For yet when I call her she mocks.

MOTHER GOOSE.

O what subtle charm is enshrined in a name,
And what does it mean to admire?
And what, after all, is the value of fame,
And what is the use to aspire?

In the uncertain past lived an uncertain dame,
Of an uncertain age and address;
Of an uncertain mind, with an uncertain claim
To a title we honor and bless.

While the ages have rolled in their progress away
And new scenes are shown on the stage,
This author is yet in the front of the play,
And yet do her melodies rage.

The mothers yet cling to the rollicking verse
This dame perpetrated long past;
Though all printed volumes contain nothing worse
Her's only is destined to last.

The children all listen with open-mouthed awe
To her most nonsensical rhyme;
And never a critic dilates on a flaw,
Nor prates of poetical crime.

This author, or authoress, as you prefer,
Is one for whom parents have use;

For, when it cures children of noise, why defer
A dose of dear, old Mother Goose?

TRUTH.

I wandered through the grove and glade and glen
When mind assumed its first unfolding powers,
Till far beyond the common haunts of men,
So rapt in contemplation, that the hours
Passed swiftly by, and, ere I was aware,
I found a cave and met a hermit there.

Said I, "While thinking, I have lost my way,
Canst thou not point me to the way of Truth?
I fain would tread therein, so tell me pray,
That I may soon be gone." Said he, "Forsooth!"
And smote my eyes and said, "Now gentle youth
Behold the former seekers after Truth!"

I saw the dreary dungeons, dank and dark,
Where men have writhed and worried, wept and wailed,
And longed for light, until the spectral spark
Of reason flickered faint and feebly failed;—
All earnest seekers after Truth, who found
But nothingness beneath a felon's mound.

I saw the Inquisition, worn and old,
Whose crumbling walls, iniquitous and dread,
If speaking, could a tale of blood unfold
So horrible that e'en it's tortured dead
If living, scarce such terrors could conceive
And I cannot describe, nor you believe.

I saw the many monuments of men,—
  Grim sentinels above their crumbling bones;—
Who wrought and shaped and built and died and then
  In dust found recompense for sighs and groans,
And ne'er returned to give a gleam of light
  To rift the settled pall of hopeless night.

Then spake the hermit: "Court the virtues all
  And bear the burden of your acts and deeds;
Be prompt in answering to duty's call
  And follow where enlightened reason leads;
'Tis then, within thy broad, unfolding mind,
  Thou wilt the Truth in ripened fullness find."

MELODY.

Orpheus played to trees
  That nodded to his notes,
He played upon the breeze
  And birds with tiny throats
Well skilled to time and tone
  Flocked to his voice and lyre
To hear the strains alone
  That genius could inspire.

The charms of time and tune
  Are now as sweet as when
Beneath the Thracian moon
  They sounded through the glen!
As sad as when they crept
  Through every lonely place
And stones insensate wept
  By quiet paths in Thrace.

THE MOUNTAIN STREAM!

Whirling dizzily, rippling busily,
Skipping, dancing all day long;
Gliding carefully, darting darefully,
Singing its happy, mirthful song.

Brightly shimmering, faintly glimmering,
Touched and tinged by sun and shade;
Glancing here and there, smiling everywhere,
Frisking on through the glen and glade.

Splashing cheerfully, dashing fearfully
O'er the deep and dread abyss;
Spraying merrily, rising airily,
Greeting the rainbow with it's kiss.

Sliding easily, sweeping breezily,
Threading onward through the lea;
Verdure brightening, labor lightening,
Rushing on to the waiting sea.

WHAT IS DEATH?

'Tis but the final end of care,
A respite to old age;
To sickness 'tis an answered prayer
Receipting nature's wage;
A farewell to the old and sere,
A welcome to the new;

The seal upon each sigh and tear
And key to clearer view;
The leaf resigning to the bud,
The night's release to dawn;
The leveler of birth and blood
As well as brain and brawn.

WORK AND SLEEP.

Eyes close
In repose,
Under the shroud of night;
Day break
We awake,
Under a gleam of light;
Never shirk
Honest work,
For it brings repose;
They rest
Who work best,
Ere the daylight close.

THE TRAMP'S SOLILOQUY.

I am a hungry, weather-beaten bo.
I've dinged the cinder path for forty years;
My fins no longer know the feel of dough;
My living is most sadly in arrears.

I've been the mouthpiece for audacious curs
While looking for a piece of soggy punk,
And oftentimes insulted by the slurs
I've heard while begging pennies to get drunk.

With sky-piece for a pillow, I have kipped,
The moonlight softly swiping through the bush;
And in my dreams my habitat I slipped
And once again I mingled with the push.

And e'en awake, I think of other days
Of shipwrecked fowl and Java, milked and sweet;
Of hunks of slaughter worth a prince's praise,
And for dessert a pith that's fit to eat.

I moped the city's main stems once in form,
With patent kicks and perfume on my hair;
A shower stick to tantalize the storm,
And decent seams to breast the thoroughfare.

But then I got to slopping, and the bulls
Kept pinching me until no longer flush;
And, losing all my former friendly pulls,
I sought the solace of the path and brush.

But now my lamps are burning dim and low;
I can no longer clearly see the ties;
My wheels are creaking wearily and slow,
The laughing stock of all the favored guys.

My species will no doubt become extinct,
And in the big museums yet to be
The push will laugh to see my mummy linked
To some bulldog that yet will cling to me.

JOHN HOWARD PAYNE.

His heart-torn pathos has enriched the earth
And blessed the land that gave his genius birth;
Mankind forgets his life, almost his name,
But gives his verse alone undying fame.

OUR CRACKERJACK.

You ought to see our crackerjack when mounted on his wheel,
You bet he is a hummer and he'll never miss a meal;
His appetite is wonderful!—he never has enough;—
His muscles are like iron and his hide is awful tough.

He rides, upon an average, a hundred miles a day,—
A gliding on so easy like, without an hour's delay;
And when it comes to sprinting,--say, you ought to see his back!
It's as humpy as a camel and—he is our crackerjack.

You see him at a racing meet, as clumsy as a mule;
He doesn't look as fine as those who go to riding school;
But when the word is given he will dig into his steed,
And before the tape is covered you can bet he's in the lead.

He's peaceable with everyone, as gentle as a lamb,
But there's muscle lying waiting and there's danger in his calm;
He's but a sleeping tiger, you can wake him with a slap,
And you'll find him rough and ready and quite handy in a scrap.

LOVE SONG.

My heart is light as air,
For my love is very fair,
There's music in her laughter and there's sadness in her sigh;
There is joy and bliss
In her virgin kiss,
And there's beauty in the beaming and the gleaming of her eye,–
In the beaming and the gleaming of her eye.

There's a charm in her grace,
And there's beauty in her face;

There's an unwritten poem in her jaunty little air;
There's a symmetry sweet
In her dainty feet,
And the fairies make a heaven in the clusters of her hair,—
A heaven in the clusters of her hair.

So sweetly with mine
Do her arms entwine,
And her lips are honey-laden with a nectar like the dew;
She's bethrothed to me
And is bound to be
A faithful and devoted little darling and a true,—
A devoted little darling and a true.

TWO PICTURES.

Had I the gift of eloquence of speech,
Or were I but the Rafael of verse,
I'd paint for you a picture that would teach
The art of blackness in a language terse.

I'd paint the glowing hopes that melt and fade
And vanish in the darkness of despair;—
The hosts beset, beleagured and dismayed
By haunting visions of destroying care.

I'd paint the mire and bog where lights delude;—
The morass that engulfs whom it ensnares;
The frosts that blight, the bitter winds that brood
A train of evils stealing unawares.

I'd paint the denizens of field and brake,
Of mountain fastnesses and glade and glen;—
The sneaking jackal and the slimy snake,
And all the beasts of prey that haunt the den.

I'd paint whatever creeps and glides and crawls,
And all that sears and severs, tears and rends,
Or snares and sneaks and snarls and springs and sprawls,
Or robs and wrecks and spoils to gain its ends.

I'd paint the inky cloud that blurs and clots,
And all that ever smirches, smears and stains,
And brands and blisters, blears and blights and blots,
And all that ever wounds and grieves and pains.

I'd paint the woes and miseries of men;—
The death knell and the corpse and shroud and pall;—
The tomb and skull and skeleton, and then
I'd paint a marge of blackness 'round it all.

I'd have a chaos fit for imps of hell,
Where they might romp and revel in delight;
I'd give it all a stifling brimstone smell,
And I would call my picture "Darkest Night."

I'd paint another picture, with the dawn
Just marshalling the glories of the day;—
The picturesque Aurora, with its spawn
Of many-colored, evanescent spray.

I'd paint the joy of all the good and just;
Above despair I'd paint the star of hope;
Across the gulf I'd place the bridge of trust,
And to the wreck I'd throw a gleaming rope.

I'd paint the health-hue on the paling cheek.
And smoothe the wrinkles on the brow of care;
I'd place a strong support beneath the weak,
And glory give to every silvered hair.

I'd paint the melody of childish laugh;—
The playful dimple on the cheek of mirth;
I'd give the maimed a crutch and age a staff,
And mete to want the measure of its worth.

And purity in saintly robes I'd paint,
And virtue, seated on the world's great throne;
And charity, secure from every taint,
I'd honor with a dignity her own.

And I would paint the good and great and grand,
And all that blesses, charms and soothes and awes,
And lifts and lights and guides, or lends a hand
Of helpfulness in every worthy cause.

And I would paint the million fruits of love,
Of gratitude and faith and hope and trust;—
All benisons descended from above
To sanctify our animated dust.

And, like a benediction, I would paint
The bow of promise, many-hued and bright,
Above all, like the halo of a saint,
And I would call my picture "Brightest Light."

WHAT IS POETRY.

It is natural endowment, with the best to be acquired,
The essence of attainment and the most to be admired;
The cream of every language, pure, agreeable and sweet,
It is beauty, it is virtue, it is harmony complete.

It's the metrical expression of the soul attuned aright,
That dwells within a fairy-land of magical delight;

The fruit of kindred graces that to very few belong,
Though aweing all in music and though soothing all in song.

It flashes in the lightning and it thunders in the storm,
It speaks from every painting and adorns the sculptured form;
It's the charm of all position, the grace of every pose,
The perfume and the color and the blossom of the rose.

It is literary consonance with inspiration rife,
A fountain ever gushing with the melody of life;
The symmetry and splendor and the symphony of speech,
And cold indeed must be the heart it's virtue cannot reach.

WHEELING.

If you never had a notion
Of the poetry of motion
You should try at once the sweet, seductive wheel
For the fact there's no denying
It comes very near to flying,
Such airy-like sensations one will feel.

There's an energetic feeling
That is found alone in wheeling,
There's an incense from the meadow and the plain
Where the doves are gently cooing
And the cattle faintly mooing
And the birds are sweetly singing their refrain.

In the prairies rife with flowers
And the fairy woodland bowers
There's a luxury of perfume rich and rare,
And you get enthusiastic
As your muscles grow elastic
With the vigor of the pure and bracing air.

So entrancing is the riding
That you seem to be but gliding
As the gods of Grecian fable did of yore,
And the mind with fancy haunted
Feels an ecstacy undaunted
And an energy it never felt before.

EXPERIENCE.

I love to hold communion with the hours,
Which, like grim phantoms of the vanished years,
Bring back the perfume of forgotten flowers
To compensate a retrospect of tears.

When I surrendered all my cherished toys,
I found that life was real and not in vain;
And though it held for me a wealth of joys,
It also brought my share of grief and pain.

Auspicious dawns oft ushered dreary days,
And chosen paths oft proved seductive roads
Which led me on through sweet enchanted ways,
To end at last in dark and drear abodes.

ARABIAN NIGHTS.

I read in the "Arabian Nights,"
Of demons, fairies, elves and sprites
And foul, misshapen, hideous wights,
Revolting, grim and grisly sights
Of scaly monsters, measly mites,
Of all that thrills, and yet affrights
And keeps me long awake o'nights.

I sleep and dream of every fairy,
Genie, fay and creature airy,
Nymph and naiad, wild and wary,
Watchful griffin plumed and hairy,
Gnome and goblin, frightful, very,
Spirit sad and spirit merry,
All one mind can hold and carry.

Spectres through the walls are gliding,
O'er the bed clothes coldly sliding,
In the darkened corners hiding
With but momentary biding,
Each one leering and deriding,
Glaring, frowning, scowling, chiding,
Only evil thus betiding.

Phantoms, dire, from all creation
Make my room their destination,
Keeping me in consternation
With their dread concatenation
And their constant innovation
Bringing naught of delectation,
Causing mental aberration.

Bogles and all apparitions,
Goblins vile in all conditions
Witch and wizard on their missions,
Fauns and Satyrs, all positions,
Giants, pygmies, impositions,
Dragons, vampires, all editions,
Bugbears, monsters, no omissions.

Nauseating and fantastic,
Fiendish, frightful and elastic,

Vile, uncanny and bombastic,
All repulsive and gymnastic,
Odious, grisly, grim and plastic,
Woeful, dire and non-scholastic,
Dreadful as a scene monastic.

I see the roc through azure winging,
And the dwarf his treasure bringing.
Specters ever upward springing,
Horrid, slimy serpents stinging,
Hydras to their victims clinging,
Phantom voices sweetly singing,
And with all my head is ringing.

It is quite a havoc making,
For my very soul is quaking
And I'm shuddering and shaking
As on mental vision breaking
All these terrors are awaking,
Real to me and unmistaking,
Not a memory forsaking,
As I lay and tumble there
'Mid these creatures of the air
On the verge of terror quite
Through the horrors of the night.

THE MAIDEN.

I picture in fancy the face of a maiden
Caressed by the soft, wooing zephyrs that creep
Through bowers with perfume so opium laden
That all but the passions are given to sleep;
Bewitching with charms that a kind nature dowers
The child gently reared 'mid the sunshine and flowers.

The treasure of innocence gleams in her eye—
A trust to betray which were doubly a crime;
Her soul is as pure as the blue of the sky—
The tribute to love by a generous clime;
Her soul-speaking eyes in their wonderment seeming
To vent all the fairy surprises of dreaming.

There clings to her full and voluptuous lips
A nectar impelled from the fountain of love,
As pure as the best that the humming bird sips
From blossoming vine on the trellis above—
The lips that for aye seem inviting a kissing
That yet they remain all the sweeter for missing.

There beams in her features an unspoken plea
Which voices the angel that nestles within,
Imploring of you and demanding of me
Protection, at least, from the legions of sin
That ever through delicate features are etching
The cold, conscious guilt-lines that evil is sketching.

A COON HUNT.

Did you ever go coon hunting when the timber was all bare,
And the corn was ripe for husking and the frost was in the air?
You can talk about your shooting and your fishing in the lake,
But for jolly sport I'm thinking, plain coon hunting takes the cake.

There's the moon a shining downward through the branches of the trees,
Forming weird and grotesque shadows, ever changing with the breeze,
And the dead leaves crunch and rustle neath our heavy, restless tread,
And each stump is like a tombstone in a city of the dead.

Hark! the hunters stop and listen as they hear the distant bay
That re-echoes through the forest and in silence dies away;
Then another and another—aye the scent is getting hot!
And the waiting band of hunters are a happy, grinning lot.

Now the other hounds are joining and they all pick up the trail
And we know the gallant leader is a dog that cannot fail;
So we all set off to meet them at a swift and reckless pace,
While the music of their voices gives a relish to the chase.

Hark! that sound is not mistaken—they have treed the coon at last
And we find them, tails a-wagging, looking upward hard and fast,
And away up in the tree-top, there between us and the moon,
With it's fiery eyes a-staring, is a fat and juicy coon.

While the dogs keep up a-howling men are busy with the axe;
And there's some among the choppers who are troubled with their backs
When their wives need wood for washing—but that's all forgotten now;—
There! look out! the tree is falling! O, now isn't that a row!

There's the snarling, biting, growling, and the whining of the coon
Who is making sharp objections to a shuffling off so soon;
Say, you ought to hear him pleading like the wailing of a child;—
But coon-hunting is the sport to which all other sports are mild.

WATER LILIES.

On a crystal lake's shimmering wave,
In the hush of the moonlight's seclusion,
The water Nymphs gathered to lave,—
Quite safe, as they thought, from intrusion.

They played 'mong the ferns on the brink,
And hid in the shade of the willows;
They petted the fawns come to drink,
And gossiped of friends' peccadillos.

So noisy their mirth soon became,
A Sprite was awakened from dreaming;
Who, seeking the parties to blame,
At once set the water Nymphs screaming.

They scampered away in affright,
Because the bold Sprite was presuming,
But each Naiad left in her flight
A lily that burst into blooming.

MY SWEETHEART.

"How old are you, my pretty face?"
I asked a blue-eyed tot;
She upward looked with charming grace
And answered: "Ize fordot."

"Whose girl are you?" I asked more free
Of this bewitching miss;
"Ize mamma's darling dirl," said she,
And then I stole a kiss.

I kissed her for her mother's sake,
I kissed her for her own;
Nor am I here ashamed to make
My dual passion known.

I fondly love this child of three,
So precious to my life;
For she is doubly dear to me —
Her mamma is my wife.

A WARNING.

When Mrs. Jones looked all the almanac through
For symptoms of wheezes and sneezes,
She found, as indeed you or I may find too,
She had forty-seven diseases.

Alarmed at the prospect, she hustled to bed
And sent for the family physician,
Her tongue and her pulse, so the good doctor said,
Proved her in alarming condition.

"But here is a bottle of medicine that
Will make a new woman of you,
The next time I call you will be strong and fat
And rife with a vigor anew."

She got out of bed when the stuff was all gone
And felt as the "new women" feel,
She left all the children at home with dear John
And pedalled away on her wheel.

The doctor again to the house came and found
A welcome defying description,
For John, with a pistol, said, "Doc, I'll be bound
You'll write her another prescription;

Just counteract all of the other stuff, please,
And add that the wheel is an evil,
And say that it's use with no woman agrees
And then you may go to the devil."

ACCOMPLISHMENT.

He, who would some great end attain,
Must thread, an isolated soul,

The weary stretch of barren plain
Ere he can reached his cherished goal.

For such is life, a dismal trail,
Where each must seek his way alone;
While thousands by the wayside fail,
Hopes unfulfilled and ends unknown.

The course may be a desert waste,
Without a forest, stream or lake;
He will have many a mirage chased,
Who can Tantalus' apple take.

I WOULD I COULD.

I would that I could versify,
Mellifluous as Poe!
That I might sing until I die
The sentiments that show
The magic charm of Bobbie Burns,
And Shakespeare's wond'rous scope,
With Byron's grand, inspiring turns
As finished as a Pope.

Then might I set to music all
My wishes and desires,
And from the world of shade recall
The strains of silent lyres,
I'd breathe a worthy pæan to
Each dearly honored name,
And, with his strength revived anew,
Ride Pegasus to fame.

I'd wake the sleepy Muses till
They all encored my song,
And through the vault of heaven thrill
The nodding, starry throng;
I'd sing as did the warbler blind,
Whose lot it was to please
With melody, the wise and kind,
Applauding Hellenese.

I'd sound the note of harmony
Uniting human hearts,
And honor all the years to be
With my inspiring arts,
Enthroning in sublimity,
Beyond the critics' reach,
The angel of divinity
Enshrined in human speech.

"SANDY."

Just at the foot of Prospect Hill,
Where old Missouri sweeps amain,
There is a spot sequestered, still,
Called "Hell's Half Acre"—to be plain.

But for the dogs that swarm the street,
One could but think all beings sped;
Here "Sandy" dwells in bliss complete,
The mighty monarch of a shed.

He never has a debt to pay,
And owes no man a single cent,
Nor is he troubled any way
How he should meet his monthly rent.

He never goes to much expense
For laundry bills, nor toilet soap;
He lives alone in present tense
Indulging no ambitious hope.

He has no friend to beg a loan,—
A yellow dog's his only chum,
Requiring but a scrap or bone,
Or meat when "Sandy" gives him some.

He never relished overmuch
The luxuries of modern life;
A comb and brush and bath and such
Are total strangers to his life.

To gather bottles "Sandy" strives,
And rags and such to sell again;
He thus upon the alley thrives,—
An independent, self-made man.

He finds all knowledge quite a bore,
And boys are devils in his eyes;
He is not troubled much with lore,
And even less with family ties.

Before him he a barrow wheels,
A stick or hatchet in his hand;
A flock of small boys at his heels,—
The maddest man in all the land.

THE DEATH ANGEL.

There is said to appear to the vision clear
Of the righteous soul at death,

An angel of light in a halo bright
That points the way of the spirit's flight,
And like a star in the waning light,
    It fades ere the morning's breath.

When it comes and goes not a watcher knows,
    For a tear drop dims each eye;
As they hover there in the lamp-light's glare,
And see but the cold and the dreamy stare,
And miss the light of the presence fair
    That makes it easy to die.

PAT'S OVERCOAT.

Pat Murphy was a miner bold,
  A rugged mountaineer,
But yet he shivered with the cold
  In winter long and drear.

Said he, "Bedad I have a mind
  To get an overcoat."
So, with his rifle went to find
  A bear or mountain goat.

Ere long he met a hungry bear
  That wasn't very fat;
When Bruin said, "My meat is there,"
  "My overcoat," said Pat.

Although he shot, 'tis sad to note
  His aim was incomplete,
But still he got his overcoat
  And Bruin got his meat.

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